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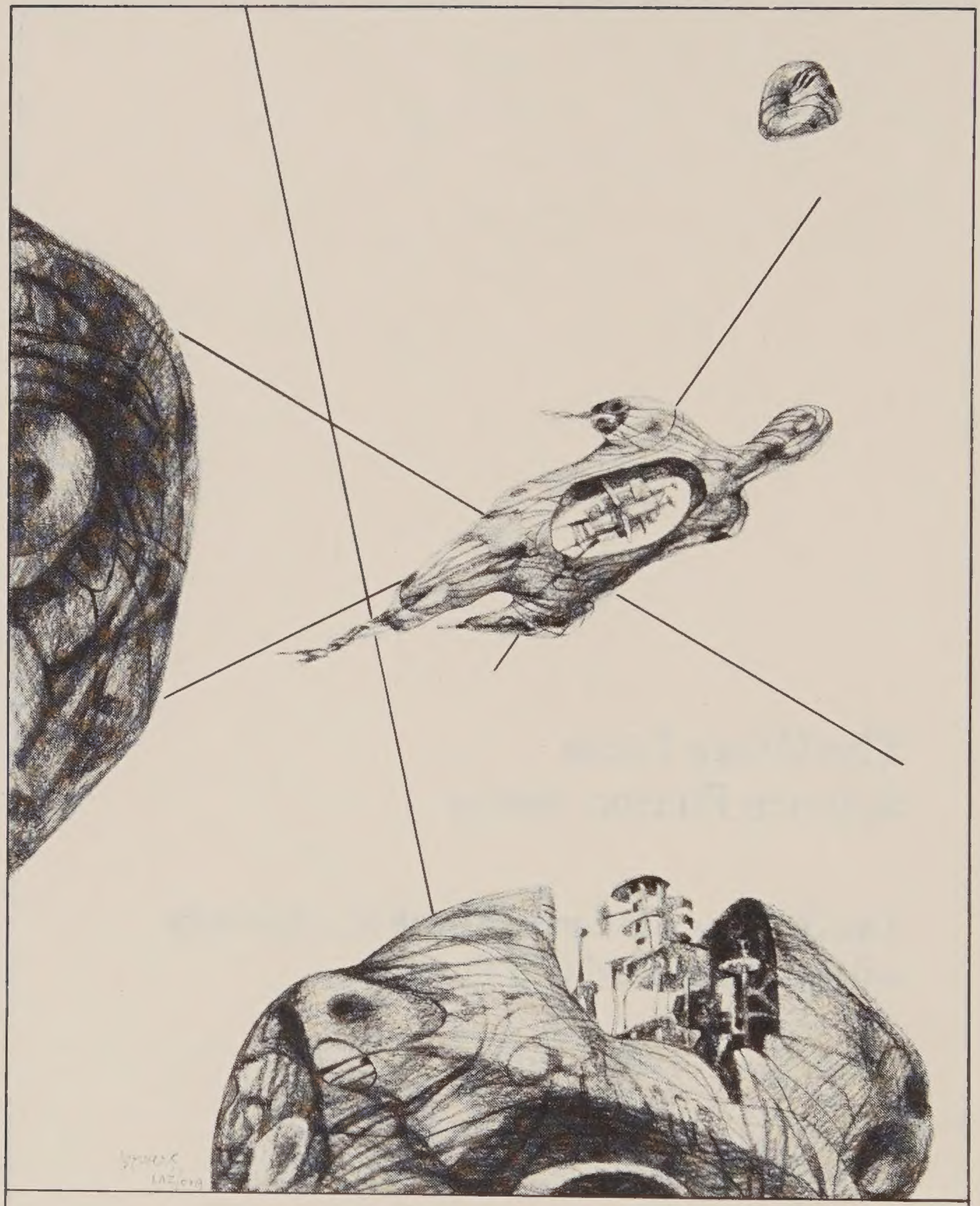
The Gregg Press
Science Fiction Series

The Science Fiction of Frank R. Stockton
edited by Richard Gid Powers



The Gregg Press Science Fiction Series

David G. Hartwell, L. W. Currey, *Editors*
Richard Gid Powers, *Associate Editor*

The Science Fiction of Frank R. Stockton

An Anthology

FRANK R. STOCKTON

Edited with an Introduction by
RICHARD GID POWERS

GREGG PRESS

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This original anthology includes complete photographic reprints of the texts of seven stories, all reproduced from *The Novels and Stories of Frank R. Stockton* published by Charles Scribner's Sons in 1899 - 1900, except for "My Translatophone," reprinted from *John Gayther's Garden and the Stories Told Therein,* published by Charles Scribner's Sons in 1902. The trim sizes of the original texts were 5½ by 8⅜ inches.

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Introduction

ONE MONTH in 1899 *Literature* magazine decided it was high time for the United States, now that it had surpassed the Old World in everything else, to have its own literary Academy. The magazine polled its readers, tallied the results and came up with *vox populi*'s turn-of-the-century All-American writing team. Heading the list was William Dean Howells, who was then at the height of his fame though past the peak of his powers. Next came John Fiske, the man who had taught Americans everything they wanted to know about history and science and God's role as the missing link. Mark Twain, America's funny man, was third and fourth was Thomas Bailey Aldrich, of whom it was said that while his inspiration was trivial, the trivia was his own. In fifth place, ahead of Henry James, S. Weir Mitchell and Bret Harte, was Frank R. Stockton.[1]

Such enduring fame as Frank Stockton still has is due to his celebrated literary puzzle, "The Lady or the Tiger?" (1882). This story made Stockton, who had been modestly successful as a juvenile writer and managing editor of *St. Nicholas,* a popular childrens' magazine, into something of a literary superstar. Many of Stockton's stories after "Tiger" appeared in the country's most prestigious magazines, and not a few of his books were best-sellers, but Stockton remained, for the rest of his life, the man who had written the story about the lady and the tiger. Another writer might have become bitter at having everything he wrote unfavorably compared to this early story, but this potentially maddening situation was simply put to use as the premise for another story (one of his best), "His Wife's Deceased Sister" (1884). Not much happened to Frank Stockton — he was something of an invalid, and even when well he was not exceptionally adventuresome. For subjects he relied on his imagination and his reading in light fiction and the newspapers. Whatever Stockton read about, whoever he met, whatever he learned, was material for another story. For Stockton, life was not something to be explored but to be exploited — as story material. And science was like everything else, another quarry to be mined.

Stockton was one of the most popular entertainers of his age, and he earned his success by understanding his public. He wrote for the respectably prosperous middle class that bought the great popular magazines: *Century, Collier's, Harper's, Once a Week, Scribner's.* His readers liked Stockton because he was one of them. He was born in 1834 and grew up in a New Jersey almshouse — not as one of the guests but as the son of the superintendent. Like many others before and since who have done well for themselves by doing good for the poor, Stockton's chief ambition seems to have been to avoid becoming poor himself, an ambition his audience fully shared. He wrote about heroes with the same ideals as Horatio Alger's — financial independence and respectability with family and home as the visible proofs of these spiritual qualities. Whenever his stories treated these values lightly, he clearly labeled the work as fantasy: he was a successful weaver of ghost stories — friendly ghost stories.

In his own day Stockton was known as something of a stylist, and since he considered his style to be his most precious resource, this is a matter that deserves some attention. Stockton's style is graceful, balanced to the point of being periodic, larded with adjectives and studded with commas. The reader is as aware of *how* the story is being told as he is of *what* is being told. This manner of writing removes both reader and writer from the action to an ironic distance where they can enjoy the picturesqueness of the subject without becoming involved with it. In Stockton's work the non-involvement of author with subject is almost complete; his writing is an extreme example of the late nineteenth-century genteel sensibility, a literary manner that was doing little more than talking to itself by the time H. L.

Mencken, Theodore Dreiser and Sinclair Lewis delivered the *coup de grace* to it after the turn of the century.

Stockton is a significant figure in the history of science fiction because besides writing two stories that have stood the test of time ("The Great War Syndicate" in 1889 and "The Great Stone of Sardis" in 1897), science interested him in precisely the same way it interested his securely middle class audience: it scared them to death. His stories register the impact of science on the non-scientific, even anti-scientific imagination of the late nineteenth-century average American. It was probably an advantage in appealing to this audience that Stockton's was an imagination unencumbered by formal education. Never having been inside a college, Stockton learned what science he knew from the newspapers and the encyclopedia: there is no evidence in any of his stories that he ever delved any deeper. He prepared to write science fiction by studying not science itself, but other science fiction. Had Jules Verne not written science fiction, Stockton would not have known how; had Verne's science fiction not sold well, Stockton would not have written science fiction at all.

Frank Stockton wrote quite a few stories that have at least a tangential relationship to science fiction. Several of these are simply scientific hoaxes, literary impostures in which scientific-sounding mumbo-jumbo takes the place of a magic potion. Not that Stockton had anything against magic potions: "The Vizier of the Two Horned Alexander" (1898) is a wandering Jew story with a fountain of perpetual youth. "The Reversible Landscape" (1884) has an automatic oil painting copier that even gets the brushstrokes right, while "The Magic Egg" (1907) uses a hypnotism machine to make the point that only heels mess around with the heads of *nice girls.* This seems to be a moral of enduring popular interest if the success of George du Maurier's *Trilby* (1894) means anything, although Hawthorne might have been supposed to have pounded home the point with sufficient force in *The House of the Seven Gables* (1851) and *The Blithedale Romance* (1852). Besides these lesser stories, Stockton wrote (in the area of science fiction, that is — his collected stories and novels amount to twenty-three volumes) one future war story of paramount importance, "The Great War Syndicate," and the seven stories reprinted in this volume.

"The Water-Devil" (1874) is Stockton's first piece of science fiction. Like many early science fiction stories, it exploits popular interest in a new scientific marvel — in this case the transoceanic cables that, beginning with Cyrus Field's transatlantic cable in 1866, were tying the continents together into a universe of instant communications (Whitman's "Passage to India" was inspired by the same achievement). Set in the near future (1878), it is a ghost story that ends with a pseudo-scientific demystification, a literary imposture that relies more on the reader's scientific naiveté (a cargo of stored electricity), on the conventions of the sea yarn (in which sailors are assumed to be superstitious liars), and on the vogue of the ghost story (which was to become Stockton's forte), than on any climb into the realm of possibility up the futuristic Jacob's ladder of scientific discovery. But if "The Water-Devil" is a literary hoax, it is a rather graceful one, and it prefigures, in its slight way, an important subtradition in science fiction, the tall tale. The far-fetched story punctuated with broad winks toward the knowing reader is an old science fiction trick: Jack London employed it artfully in "A Relic of the Pliocene," as have more recently L. Sprague de Camp and Fletcher Pratt in *Tales from Gavagan's Bar* and Arthur C. Clarke in *Tales from The White Hart.*

Stockton was quite adept with the literary hoax. His most famous story, "The Lady or the Tiger?" leaves the choice of a conclusion to the reader's imagination and is basically an imposture on the audience. He had a particular facility with the shaggy dog story, a type of dirty trick that uses an intriguing beginning to trick the reader into a pointless meander along meaningless digressions until the long-awaited conclusion fades away behind all the verbal foliage: his "Stories of the Three Burglers" is a particularly woolly specimen of the breed.

"A Tale of Negative Gravity" (1884), which first appeared in *Century,* is less interesting for what it says than what it leaves unsaid. The story's inventor is a family man, fashionably without vocation but fashionably *with* avocations for scenery and science. His invention, anti-gravity, grows out of no overwhelming intellectual curiosity or physical need. He plays at science so as to have something to occupy his time. When he does discover anti-gravity, his only thought is that it will make his sightseeing expeditions less of an effort. His lightfooted trips have an unforeseen result, though. His odd behavior (bounding up the Matterhorn) begins to give him a bad reputation, and when he learns that this notoriety has begun to close social doors to his daughter, he hardly hesitates; the plans for the invention are deep-sixed, and the machine is cast loose into outer space: science proposes, society disposes. A story like this is only a trifle, and it was without doubt read as nothing more. But the concerns that underlie it are not trivial. Both Stockton and his audience are uneasy over anything that disturbs the placid normality of middle class life. Science is an incomprehensible threat to the most central value of gentility, no abstract value like equality or liberty, but a most palpable one: "niceness." Science is a symbol of change in many of Stockton's stories. It is an emblem for all of those unthinking acts by unserious people unconscious of the calamitous consequences of their whimsies. "A Tale of Negative Gravity" is a comic transcendence in which change is domesticated and science only a shadow monster that is scared away when the lights go on. A trivial story, perhaps, but also a morale-building ritual that may have been of some value in maintaining the middle class's confidence despite what the newspapers and *Popular Science* were saying. Stockton's work is a conventionally-minded travesty on Nietzche's great theme of the warfare between science and the proprieties, the morality of the superman versus the morality of the herd. But Nietzche would have been too nasty for Stockton's readers, who preferred to see science as a villain bent on destroying poetry and romance. In his stories Stockton's middle class seems almost impervious to anything that science could bring to bear against its smugness — or was Stockton only whistling in the dark?

"Amos Kilbright: His Adscititious Experiences" (1888) is an editor's and typesetter's nightmare which was written, according to Stockton, to send his readers to the dictionary — always an uplifting exercise which undoubtedly carries a suitable indulgence; for this reason there will not appear in these pages a definition of the sesquipedalian subtitle. "Amos Kilbright" is rescued from being merely a very good ghost story by the scientific way that the scientist tries to reverse the "materialization" process. The story reminds us that there was a time when spiritualism had all the social respectability of a UNICEF Christmas card and when it seemed that spirit-rapping might soon be a part of the science curriculum. Stockton's genial manner turns the whole episode into a friendly joke, but in a way he could not have foreseen, the joke was on him. Stockton was a man who treasured above all else respectability. He seems actually to have resented the fame that "The Lady or the Tiger?" brought him, although there is no record that he ever refused any of the royalties.

But if a writer wants a life of peace and a death of quiet he ought to leave fantasies and ghost stories alone; they are magnets that attract strange fans, men with weird gleams in their eyes and little old ladies in tennis shoes. Years after Stockton's peaceful death in 1902, a woman named Etta De Camp announced that Stockton was still writing just as hard as ever, and was dictating tales to her from the spirit world. Her book was called *The Return of Frank R. Stockton. Stories and Letters which Cannot Fail to Convince the Reader that Frank R. Stockton Still Lives and Writes Through the Instrumentality of Miss Etta De Camp* (1913), and on the cover was a picture of a translucent Mr. Stockton guiding the pen of a begowned Miss De Camp. The stories are pretty bad, but the accompanying letters show that death hadn't changed him one bit. The notes warn her not to change one word of the stories, to send them out to the magazines exactly as the spirit dictated them. Dead or alive, the spirit told her, Stockton still knew what would sell.

"The Knife that Killed Po Hancy" (1893) is another story in which Stockton berates science as a disturber of the (genteel) peace. Stockton tries to give some plausibility to the blood transfusion which transforms the Milquetoast hero into a raging Burmese pirate by dropping a few impressive names: Edouard Brown-Sequard (1817 - 1894), a French-American authority on the blood and rejuvenation, and Robert Koch (1843 - 1910), the bacteriologist who won the Nobel Prize in 1905 for discovering tests for tuberculosis. The influence on the story that matters, however, is not the work of these scientists, but the great tradition of dual personality stories that includes Edgar Allan Poe's "William Wilson" (1839), Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891), Jack London's "When the World Was Young" (1910), and the novel which undoubtedly gave Stockton the idea for his story, Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886), which had come out only a few years before "Po Hancy." When "The Knife that Killed Po Hancy" is compared to other stories that employ the same plot convention, once again the undeviatingly genteel character of

Stockton's science fiction is thrown into focus. Without exception, when these other writers introduce the *doppelganger* motif (Poe and Wilde through gothic supernaturalism, Stevenson in a scientific experiment), they use a dual personality to unmask the terror and mystery of human nature hidden behind the social role.

It is not an overstatement to say that the meaning of the dual-personality device in fiction is the conflict between nature and nurture. In Stockton's story there is scarcely an echo of the struggle between the untamable savagery of the hidden self and the fair face we wear for society. The most extreme personality variations that Stockton permits his characters are still safely within the bounds permitted by polite society. With Po Hancy's blood in his veins, Harry becomes a country club athlete whose worst impulse is to push back when jostled on the streetcar (he doesn't because he is afraid he will look ridiculous). When he civilizes himself again with an injection of the blood of a gentle girl, he becomes once more a sissy, still within the boundaries permitted gentility's denizens. The result is tame fiction, but a genial taming of this potentially wild subject was evidently what Stockton's readers required.

It was not uncharacteristic of early science fiction to borrow plot devices from gothic fiction but to use scientific gimmickry to avoid discussing the psychological implications of the story: the first science fiction story to appear in *Pearson's Magazine* was "From Silvered Locks to Feeding Bottle" (1891), an anonymous story about an old man who is given a transfusion from a four year-old and dies a still-born infant.[2] A gothic writer would have used this plot as a springboard into abnormal psychology, but since early science fiction writers could rely on their readers' interest in science to carry their stories, they could neglect exploring the psychological implications of their materials. This difference between science fiction and gothic horror probably stems from the different cultural functions of the two genres: science fiction tends to accomodate readers to science, change, progress, modernization; horror is a protest against all of these things — a refuge, if necessary, in madness as a last defense against the modern world. In his own gentle way, Stockton was reassuring his middle class readers about those very forces that were destroying their secure way of life.

"My Terminal Moraine" (1892) started with a nearly terminal migraine Stockton suffered when well-diggers on his New Jersey property almost went to China before striking water. He never got over it: besides "Moraine," his "My Well and What Came out of It" and "The Great Stone of Sardis" are also about well excavation and its discontents. The story exploits popular interest in geology, but the hero of "My Terminal Moraine" is absolutely uninvolved in his friend's scientific raptures over the discovery of a buried glacier; the story simply uses science as a *deus ex machina* that makes the young fellow wealthy enough to marry a rich neighbor. One notable aspect of this story is Stockton's outrage when his hero's new wealth is not given its due by his old-rich neighbor:

> Money is money, and whether it is derived from the ordinary products of the earth, from which came much of Mr. Havelot's revenue, or from an extraordinary project such as my glacier spur, it truly could not matter so far as concerned the standing in society of its possessor. (p. 179)

This is as close as Stockton ever came to making a speech in his writing, and it gives a significant insight into the concerns of his audience because it is a speech defending the new rich against the old. Stockton's upwardly-mobile readers would have shouted "Amen" to the proposition that all rich men are created equal, that America has no place for discrimination against a multi-millionaire because his parents were only millionaires. Not much of a crusade, but probably as much leveling democracy as *Once A Week* would have welcomed to its pages.

"My Translatophone" (1900) was Stockton's last piece of science fiction. The translatophone is a gadget that can translate any language into English; it is now standard issue in any self-respecting space opera. However, Stockton makes little use of the machine in his story; its only role is to help a lover understand his polyglot mistress' Burman murmur of encouragement and so recognize the precise moment to press his lovesuit.

Although these shorter science fiction stories of Stockton's have their points of interest, the science fiction historian and cultural pathologist must evaluate Stockton on the basis of his two longest and best-known science fiction works, "The Great War Syndicate" and "The Great Stone of Sardis." It is on the broader canvas that Stockton's strengths and weaknesses are most apparent.

"The Great War Syndicate"[3] was published in *Collier's* in 1889, comparatively early for an American future war story. In England, of course, descriptions of the "next" war had been the literary rage ever since 1871, when Sir George Tomkyns Chesney's "The Battle of Dorking" was published in *Blackwood's.* The dream that the shiny new war machinery might deliver man from war can be traced back at least as far as 1829 when Robert Southey hoped that

> the chemist and the mechanist will succeed where moralists and divines have failed. . . . the novel powers which, beyond all doubt, will be directed to the purposes of destruction, are so tremendous, and likely to be so efficient, that in their consequences they may reasonablv be expected to do more toward the prevention of war than any or all other causes.[4]

This hope that new weapons would lead to world peace sprang, if not eternally, at least regularly in the hearts of liberal and radical thinkers like Jack London ("Goliah," 1908) and H. G. Wells. Wells' *The World Set Free* (1914) foresaw an atomic age when the destructiveness of the new bombs would force the nations to outlaw war. Even *after* the Great War, John Dewey was still suggesting that the submarine and the airplane might "do more to displace war than all the moralizing in existence," that "air navigation alone would obliterate national frontiers," and that the "social mobilization of science" might "initiate a new type of democracy."[5]

In future war stories the idealistic crusade for world peace was more often than not linked to national interest by having the war lead to the rule of the world by one's own country: this was an idea that held special appeal for Americans, although the British were not immune, as Louis Tracy's *The Final War* (1896) demonstrates.

Frank Stockton's "The Great War Syndicate" is one of these variations on the theme of "America Wants What the World Needs." It is remarkable that it should have appeared in 1889, the same year as Mark Twain's *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court.* Both writers were trying to say the same things in their different ways according to their different abilities, which must suggest that they both were expressing the same cluster of attitudes in American culture. Twain tells about how his Connecticut Yankee, Hank Morgan, tries to update sixth-century England in the image of the scientific, businesslike nineteenth century that he had been knocked out of by a crowbar smash on his head. Hank turns the Round Table into a business syndicate of Robber Barons outfitted in plug hats. The directive of "The Boss" replaces the edict of the King as Hank fights dirt and ignorance with patent soap and public schools. His most far-reaching ambition is to tame the rough and brutal world of chivalry with his mockingly efficient command of scientific weapons (which he refers to as "labor-saving devices"). In one episode he wins a tournament against the united knighthood of England, his only weapons a lasso and a revolver. Modern business methods and anti-romantic Yankee common sense are well on their way to creating a technological Jerusalem in England's green and pleasant land when the Church puts Hank and all his reformers under the interdict. The story ends with an apocalypse that is an amazing forecast of our century's many doomed efforts to bring reluctant and mistrustful backward peoples the gift of peace with a sword. Hank and his last few survivors make a final stand against the Old Order, but they are undone by the destructiveness of their own weapons: they are trapped by the millions of rotting bodies that their machine guns and electric fences have killed. Finally, in a death rattle of frustration, Hank unleashes a superweapon that destroys the nation that his science has been unable to save.

Being a man of his time, Frank Stockton was oblivious to the nightmare possibilities within the dream of world peace enforced by overwhelming power in the right hands. His story was truer to the smiling side of the dream, the only side most of his audience knew. Like Twain's, Stockton's story is an anti-romantic satire that takes war away from the warriors and turns it over to the businessmen and scientists. Unlike Twain, Stockton commits himself fully to the belief that force can be the midwife of progress, and he is most unlike Twain when he describes the almost painless cost of bringing about the New Dispensation. Stockton's British, unlike any human beings who have ever lived, are willing, even eager, to throw over their loyalties and their pride once it is demonstrated that it is in their best interest to do so.

"The Great War Syndicate" depends exclusively on its original plot idea and on its detailed descriptions of new weapons to sustain the readers' interest. It extends the usual weak characterization of science fiction to an almost unsurpassable point: it is no exaggeration to say that the book has no *characters* at all, hence *a fortiori* no characterization. A naval incident off the Newfoundland Bank fisheries leads to a declaration of war between the United States and Great Britain; a syndicate of American millionaires proposes that it be given a contract to fight the war, using its own weapons, personnel and plans. Since the government is unprepared for war, it accepts the offer. The syndicate's novel naval notion pits small semi-submergible boats called crabs against the British men-of-war; these crabs are able to grapple with the enemy and shear off their rudders and propellers. The British fleet is quickly rendered helpless. Having repelled the British attack the syndicate goes on the offensive. It orders the British to evacuate a fort near Cardiff for a demonstration of its "instantaneous motor" weapon which can totally disintegrate whatever target the syndicate chooses. Understandably vague on details, Stockton has invented a weapon of total destructiveness which is subject to minute control and precise delivery. It is interesting that the British want to surrender before the instantaneous motor can be demonstrated. The syndicate refuses because the British population must be made to understand that the government is up against total ruin, so that there will be no risk of radical revolution. After England surrenders, the most wealthy British capitalists form their own syndicate and go into partnership with the Americans. At the conclusion the Anglo-American syndicate is policing a world happy to be policed, a world in which all mankind will share in the benefits of Anglo-American civilization by becoming ersatz Anglo-Saxons:

> Certain it is, that after the formation of this syndicate, all the nations of the world began to teach English in their schools, and the Spirit of Civilization raised her head with a confident smile.[6]

It is remarkable that in 1889 Stockton should have uncovered a current in American thought that would surface as the nation's official foreign policy after World War II, when America possessed the superweapon that would let it test the Great War

Syndicate theory. Those who thought they saw the end of war inside the mushroom cloud could have taken their lines from Frank Stockton:

> The desire to evolve that power which should render opposition useless had long led men from one warlike invention to another. Every one who had constructed a new kind of gun, a new kind of armour, or a new explosive, thought that he had solved the problem, or was on his way to do so. The inventor of the instantaneous motor had done it.[7]

The strange love affair between America and the superweapon has a long and devious history, and some of the story is buried in the yellowed pages of nearly forgotten popular literature. "The Great War Syndicate" is an important chapter in that story.

Frank Stockton and the most prolific of all the future war writers, George Griffith — who wrote two "Great War Syndicate" imitations, "The Great Pirate Syndicate" (1899) and "The Great Weather Syndicate" (1906) — found a ready market for their work because these stories performed an essential task in the culture of their day. In the modern nation individuals feel most strongly that they belong to a "we" group when the crowd huddles together protectively against a threat from some "them." Fear and hatred of foreign nations must be present for modern states to enjoy a sense of cultural solidarity. William James once called for a "moral equivalent to war" because he knew that if war was to be outlawed then something must be invented to perform the function that war performs in the unification of a country. James hoped that the substitute could be sports or do-gooding, but the public had already clearly indicated its choice: if it could not have a war, let it have a war scare. One of the cheapest ways that it could have its war scare was through a future war story. A modern nation projects the image of the enemy into the world out of its own group psychological needs, but since all other countries are projecting similar images there are always plenty of foreign nations that seem to be playing the roles that the stereotypes predict. The future war story was popular because it could make use of current events to satisfy the reader's need for national solidarity. All successful future war stories, before they do anything else, put the reader through an imaginary threat to his group and so give him a strong sense of belonging. Some of the most successful future war stories aimed at nothing else: Erskine Childers in *The Riddle of the Sands* (1903), Captaine Danrit in *La Guerre de demain* (1889 - 1893), and M. P. Sheil in his Yellow Peril novels. The cultural needs that future war stories once satisfied are now the province of assassination exposes, "save the ozone layer" crusades, what the Germans call *Weltuntergangsroman (On the Beach, Cat's Cradle)* and catastrophe stories like *The Towering Inferno* or *Jaws.* So it goes.

"The Great Stone of Sardis" (1897) is Stockton's other famous science fiction story. The hero is evidently modeled on Stockton's world famous New Jersey neighbor at Menlo Park, who also ran a sort of assembly-line invention factory. Roland Clewe apparently chooses his projects at random, and they range from automatic button-hole makers to submarines and X-Ray telescopes that peer through solid earth. When Roland decides he isn't getting rich and famous fast enough to get married as quickly as he would like, he throws all his energy into his two most advanced projects, a submarine polar expedition and an automatic earth borer. He sends the submarine to the North Pole, where it discovers a polar sea and sends a telegraph message from the pole back to Sardis, New Jersey (it drags the wire all the way). Clewe stays behind in Sardis where his "Artesian ray" finds a blaze of light fifteen miles below the earth's surface; when he goes down the tunnel dug by his "automatic shell" the light turns out to be a gigantic diamond, the remains of the comet that formed the earth's core. The story alternates between these two barely related plots: about the only connection is that the same mad Pole tries to foil both experiments.

A basic problem in this and other stories is Stockton's notion of a scientist's motivation. Stockton could not imagine a respectable gentleman performing any sort of productive labor, except to make enough money for retirement to respectable inactivity. He admired scientists sensible enough to work on something that would lead to a big payoff in a short time. Just as the prudent businessman has two unrelated enterprises going on simultaneously to diversify his risks, the practical scientist hedges his bets by working on, say, the button-hole maker and the X-Ray. This gives him twice the chance of getting out of the lab before the fumes get to him.

James D. Watson's *The Double Helix* (1968) was a sensational success because it confirmed the public's gut feeling that scientists want the same thing as quiz show contestants: to climb up that $100,000 pyramid, or whatever Nobel Prizes go for nowadays. The pious theory of scientific sainthood *(The Microbe Hunters,* Paul Muni as Louis Pasteur) has become so much our orthodoxy that we forget that in the nineteenth century scientific altruism was completely incomprehensible to a popular audience: Roland Clewe's quest for fame and fortune was probably the only motivation available to Stockton as an alternative to the preferred one that maintained scientists were crazy. Whether Stockton's choice was a wise one is another question; crazy scientists make for better reading than money-grubbing ones, which is why Jules Verne knew enough to build his stories around lunatics of the laboratory.

Because Stockton's scientist was willing to take success wherever he might find it, Stockton does not feel obliged to provide any sort of "scientific" rationale for Clewe's choice of experiments. On the other hand it *is* possible for us to speculate as to why Stockton chose those particular experiments for Clewe. Stockton had Clewe working on polar exploration and geological theory because these were the things that interested popular audiences in 1897.

It is impossible for us ever to recapture the sense of wonder once associated with the most inaccessible regions of the earth: the poles, the heart of Africa, the Himalayas. In a day when the armchair quarterback sees more than the fan in the stands, there is nothing to keep a homebound Captain Video from feeling superior to the moon walker with the camera. In 1897 nobody had explored the poles (Peary would not reach the North Pole until 1909), and the subject stimulated the wildest speculation about polar seas, polar tropics, and most importantly, tunnels from the poles to an "inner world." Elisha Kent Kane's books about the search for Sir John Franklin's lost polar expedition were among the great sellers of the century *(Adrift in the Arctic Ice Pack,* 1853 and *Arctic Exploration,* 1856). There was almost as much speculation about the inside of the earth — whether it contained molten lava, or was hollow, with caves and passages and non-human races. These two settings had become conventional locations for nineteenth-century science fiction. In a general way Stockton simply chose two of the most perplexing and least known areas of the earth, since they would allow a person of his limited knowledge the greatest freedom of conjecture.

There is internal evidence that Stockton did not simply rely on his own sense of good subject matter in "Sardis," but copied the example of the greatest nineteenth-century scientific romancer, Jules Verne. "The Great Stone of Sardis" is a hybrid imitation of two Jules Verne stories, *The Adventures of Captain Hatteras* (1864) and *Journey to the Center of the Earth* (1865). *Journey to the Center of the Earth* gave Stockton little more than the idea of a book about the earth's insides and a few scientific details (his argument against the molten core theory came from Verne). From *Captain Hatteras* he got not only the idea for a North Pole expedition (with the submarine coming from Captain Nemo's similar trip under the South Pole), but a whole section of "Sardis." Except for Verne's example, there is no logical reason why Stockton's submarine does not return by retracing its path, particularly since the telegraph cable it had been dragging would have marked the trail as clearly as a paved street. Instead, the sub sails out of the polar sea (one of the details from *Hatteras)* on the surface, blasting a canal through the ice as it goes. This plan only makes sense when seen as a patient imitation of Verne. Stockton felt out of his depth in an action adventure story, and so he did as much as he could to turn the book into a sentimental romance of manners; and when he had to invent action, he followed the path that Verne had blazed.

Stockton does exploit some contemporary scientifiic curiosities in "Sardis." Roentgen had just discovered X-rays in 1895, and Simon Lake, another New Jersey neighbor, had demonstrated the first practical modern submarine in 1894 and an improved model in 1897. But for the most part, Stockton shies away from scientific detail and relies on what he knows best — genial descriptions of slight perturbations of middle-class existence. Sarah Block is only a comic character (her husband is an imitation of Dickens' Sam Weller), but there is no doubt that Stockton and his readers were in full sympathy with her in her attitude toward the science that was the ostensible subject of the book:

> In her inner soul Sarah was just as old-fashioned as anybody — she had been so born and she never changed. Endeavor as she might to make herself believe that she was a woman of modern thought and feeling, her soul was truly in sympathy with the social fashions and customs she had been brought up in, and those to which she was trying to educate herself.

> were on the outside of her, never a part of her, but always the objects of her aspirations. (pp. 243 - 44)

Frank Stockton was in love with old-fashioned ways, with the cigars and overstuffed chairs he allowed his explorers down in their submarines or riding into the bowels of the earth. Stockton liked propriety, security and normality, and he breathed an almost perceptible sigh of relief when his scientists finally satisfy their odd interests and settle down into a conventional routine. His stories are filled with far-away places, exotic sights, and far-fetched machines, but Stockton, like so many other writers of popular literature, takes his readers away from the ordinary only to convince them that, in the end,

Wherever you may wander,
Wherever you may roam,
Be it ever so humble,
There is no place like home.

Richard Gid Powers
New York

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THE WATER-DEVIL: A MARINE TALE

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THE WATER-DEVIL: A MARINE TALE

IN the village of Riprock there was neither tavern nor inn, for it was but a small place through which few travellers passed; but it could not be said to be without a place of entertainment, for if by chance a stranger—or two or three of them, for that matter—wished to stop at Riprock for a meal, or to pass the night, there was the house of Blacksmith Fryker, which was understood to be always open to decent travellers.

The blacksmith was a prominent man in the village, and his house was a large one, with several spare bedrooms, and it was said by those who had had an opportunity of judging, that nobody in the village lived better than Blacksmith Fryker and his family.

Into the village there came, late one autumn afternoon, a tall man, who was travelling on foot, with a small valise hanging from his shoulder. He had inquired for lodging for the night, had been directed to the blacksmith's house, had arranged to stop there, had had his supper, which greatly satisfied him, and was now sitting before the fire in the large living-room, smoking Blacksmith Fryker's biggest pipe. This stranger was a red-haired man, with a cheery expression, and a pair of quick, bright eyes. He was slenderly but strongly built, and was a good fellow, who would stand by, with his hands in the pockets of his short pea-jacket, and right willingly tell one who was doing something how the thing ought to be done.

But the traveller did not sit alone before the crackling fire of logs, for, the night being cool, a table was drawn near to one side of the fireplace, and by this sat Mistress Fryker and her daughter Joanna, both engaged in some sort of needlework. The blacksmith sat between the corner of the fireplace and this table, so that, when he had finished smoking his after-supper pipe, he might put on his spectacles and read the weekly paper by the light of the big lamp. On the other side of the stranger, whose chair was in front of the middle of the fireplace, sat the schoolmaster, Andrew Cardly by name, a middle-aged man of sober and attentive aspect, and very glad when chance threw in his way a book he had not read, or a stranger who could reinforce his stock of information. At the other corner of the fireplace, in a cushioned chair, which was always given to him when he dropped in to spend an evening with the blacksmith, sat Mr. Harberry, an elderly man—a man of substance, and a man in whom all Riprock, not excluding himself, placed unqualified confidence as to his veracity, his financial soundness, and his deep insight into the causes, the influences, and the final issue of events and conditions.

"On a night like this," said the stranger, stretching his long legs toward the blaze, "there is nothing I like better than a fire of wood, except, indeed, it be the society of ladies who do not object to a little tobacco smoke," and he glanced with a smile toward the table with the lamp upon it.

THE WATER-DEVIL: A MARINE TALE

Now, Blacksmith Fryker was a prudent man, and he did not consider that the privileges of his hearthstone—always freely granted to a decent stranger—included an aqcuaintance with his pretty daughter, and so, without allowing his women-folk a chance to enter into the conversation, he offered the stranger a different subject to hammer upon.

"In the lower country," said he, "they don't need fires as early in the season as we do. What calling do you follow, sir? Some kind of trade, perhaps?"

"No," said the traveller, "I follow no trade. I follow the sea."

At this the three men looked at him, as also the two women. His appearance no more suggested that he was a seaman than the appearance of Mr. Harberry suggested that he was what the village of Riprock believed him to be.

"I should not have taken you for a sailor," said the blacksmith.

"I am not a sailor," said the other. "I am a soldier, a sea-soldier—in fact, a marine."

"I should say, sir," remarked the schoolmaster, in a manner intended rather to draw out information than to give it, "that the position of a soldier on a ship possessed advantages over that of a soldier on land. The former is not required to make long marches, nor to carry heavy baggage. He remains at rest, in fact, while traversing great distances. Nor is he called on to resist the charges of cavalry, nor to form hollow squares on the deadly battle-field."

The stranger smiled. "We often find it hard enough," said he, "to resist the charges made against us by our officers. The hollow squares form themselves in our stomachs when we are on short rations, and I have known many a man who would rather walk twenty miles than sail one, especially when the sea chops."

"I am very sure, sir," said Schoolmaster Cardly, "that there is nothing to be said against the endurance and the courage of marines. We all remember how they presented arms, and went down with the *Royal George*."

The marine smiled.

"I suppose," said the blacksmith, "that you never had to do anything of that sort?"

The stranger did not immediately answer, but sat looking into the fire. Presently he said: "I have done things of nearly every sort, although not exactly that. But I have thought my ship was going down with all on board, and that's the next worst thing to going down, you know."

"And how was that?" inquired Fryker.

"Well," said the other, "it happened more times than I can tell you of, or even remember. Yes," said he, meditatively, "more times than I can remember."

"I am sure," said the schoolmaster, "that we should all like to hear some of your experiences."

The marine shrugged his shoulders. "These things," said he, "come to a man, and then, if he lives through them, they pass on, and he is ready for the next streak of luck, good or bad. That's the way with us followers of the sea, especially if we happen to be marines, and have to bear, so to speak, the responsibility of two professions. But sometimes a mischance or a disaster does fix itself upon a man's mind so that he can tell about it if he is called upon, and just now there comes to my mind a very odd thing which once happened to me, and I can give you the points of that, if you like."

The three men assured him that they would very much like it, and the two women looked as if they were of the same opinion.

Before he began, the marine glanced about him, with a certain good-natured wistfulness which might have indicated, to those who understood the countenances of the sea-going classes, a desire to wet his whistle. But if this expression were so intended, it was thrown away, for Blacksmith Fryker took no spirits himself, nor furnished them to anybody else. Giving up all hope in this direction, the marine took a long pull at his pipe and began:

"It was in the winter of 1878 that I was on the Bay of Bengal, on my way to Calcutta, and about five hundred miles distant from that city. I was not on my own ship, but was returning from a leave of absence on an American steamer from San Francisco to Calcutta, where my vessel, the United States frigate *Apache*, was then lying. My leave of absence would expire in three days, but although the *General Brooks*, the vessel I was aboard of, was more of a freight than a passenger vessel, and was heavily laden, we would have been in port in good time if, two days before, something had not happened to the machinery. I am not a machinist myself, and don't know exactly what it was that was out of order, but the engine stopped, and we had to proceed under sail. That sounds like a slow business, but the *Brooks* was a clipper-built vessel, with three masts and a lot of sails—square-sails, fore-and-aft sails, jib-sails, and all that sort of thing. I am not a regular sailor myself, and don't know the names of all the sails, but whatever sails she could have she did have, and although she was an iron vessel, and heavily freighted, she was a good sailer. We had a strong, steady wind from the south, and the captain told me that at the rate we were going he didn't doubt that he would get me aboard my vessel before my leave ran out, or, at least, so soon afterwards that it wouldn't make any difference.

"Well, as I said, the wind blew strong and steady behind us, the sails were full, and the spray dashed up at our bow in a way calculated to tickle the soul of any one anxious to get to the end of his voyage; and I was one of that sort, I can tell you.

"In the afternoon of the second day after our engine stopped, I was standing at the bow, and looking over, when suddenly I noticed that there wasn't any spray dashing up in front of the vessel. I thought we must have struck a sudden calm, but, glancing up, I saw the sails were full, and the wind blew fair in my face as I turned toward the stern. I walked aft to the skipper, and, touching my cap, I said, 'Captain, how is it that when a ship is dashing along at this rate she doesn't throw up any spray with her cutwater?' He grinned a little, and said, 'But she does, you know.' 'If you will come forward,' said I, 'I'll show you that she doesn't.' Then we walked forward, and I showed him that she didn't. I never saw a man so surprised. At first he thought that somebody had been squirting oil in front, but even if that had been the case, there would have been some sort of a ripple on each side of the bow, and there wasn't anything of the kind. The skipper took off his cap and scratched his head. Then he turned and sang out, 'Mr. Rogers, throw the log.'

"Now, the log," said the marine, turning to Mrs. Fryker and her daughter, "is a little piece of wood with a long line to it, that they throw out behind a vessel to see how fast she is going. I am not a regular Jack Tar myself, and don't understand the principle of the thing, but it tells you exactly how many miles an hour the ship is going.

"In about two minutes Mr. Rogers stepped up, with his eyes like two auger-holes, and said he, 'Captain, we're makin' no knots an hour. We're not sailin' at all.'

"'Get out!' roared the captain. 'Don't you see the sails? Don't you feel the wind? Throw that log again, sir.'

"Well, they threw the log again,—the captain saw it done,—and, sure enough, Mr. Rogers was right. The vessel wasn't moving. With a wind that ought to have carried her spinning along miles and miles in an hour, she was standing stock-still. The skipper here let out one of the strongest imprecations used in navigation, and said he, 'Mr. Rogers, is it possible that there is a sand-bar in the middle of the Bay of Bengal, and that we've stuck on it? Cast the lead.'

"I will just state to the ladies," said the marine, turning toward the table, "that the lead is a heavy weight that is lowered to the bottom of a body of water to see how deep it is, and this operation is called sounding. Well, they sounded and they sounded, but everywhere—fore, aft, and midship—they found plenty of water; in fact, not having a line for deep-sea sounding, they couldn't touch bottom at all.

"I can tell you, ladies and gentlemen," said the marine, looking from one to another of the party, "that things now began to feel creepy. I am not afraid of storms, nor fires at sea, nor any of the common accidents of the ocean; but for a ship to stand still, with plenty of water under her, and a strong wind filling her sails, has more of the uncanny about it than I fancy. Pretty near the whole of the crew were on deck by this time, and I could see that they felt very much as I did, but nobody seemed to know what to say about it.

"Suddenly, the captain thought that some unknown current was setting against us, forcing the vessel back with the same power that the wind was forcing her forward, and he tried to put the ship about so as to have the wind on her starboard quarter; but as she hadn't any headway, or for some other reason, this didn't work. Then it struck him that perhaps one of the anchors had been accidentally dropped; but they were all in their places, and if one of them had dropped, its cable would not have been long enough to touch bottom.

"Now I could see that he began to look scared. 'Mr. Browser,' said he to the chief engineer, 'for some reason or other this ship does not make headway under sail. You must go to work and get the engine running.' And for the rest of that day everybody on board who understood that sort of thing was down below, hard at work with the machinery, hammering and banging like good fellows.

"The chief officer ordered a good many of the sails to be taken in, for they were only uselessly straining the masts, but there were enough left to move her in case the power of the current, or whatever it was that stopped her, had slackened, and she steadily kept her position with the breeze abaft.

"All the crew who were not working below were crowded together on deck, talking about this strange thing. I joined them, and soon found that they thought it was useless to waste time and labor on the machinery. They didn't believe it could be mended, and if it should be, how could an engine move a vessel that the wind couldn't stir?

"These men were of many nationalities—Dutch, Scandinavian, Spanish, Italian, South American, and a lot more. Like many other American vessels that sail from our ports, nearly all the officers and crew were foreigners. The captain was a Finlander who spoke very good English. The only man who called himself an American was the chief officer; and he was only half a one, for he was born in Germany, came to the United States when he was twenty years old, stayed there five years, which didn't count either way, and had now been naturalized for twenty years.

"The consequence of this variety in nationality was that the men had all sorts of ideas and notions regarding the thing that was happening. They had thrown over chips and bits of paper to see if the vessel had begun to move, and had found that she didn't budge an inch, and now they seemed afraid to look over the sides.

"They were a superstitious lot, as might be expected, and they all believed that, in some way or other, the ship was bewitched; and, in fact, I felt like agreeing with them, although I did not say so.

"There was an old Portuguese sailor on board, an ugly-looking, weather-beaten little fellow, and when he had listened to everything the others had to say, he shuffled himself into the middle of the group. 'Look here, mates,' said he, in good enough English, 'it's no use talking no more about this. I know what's the matter. I've sailed these seas afore, and I've been along the coast of this bay all the way from Negapatam to Jellasore on the west coast, and from Chittagong to Kraw on the other, and I have heard stories of the strange things that are in this Bay of Bengal, and what they do, and the worst of them all is the Water-devil—and he's got us!'

"When the old rascal said this, there wasn't a man on deck who didn't look pale, in spite of his dirt and his sunburn. The chief officer tried to keep his knees stiff, but I could see him shaking. 'What's a water-devil?' said he, trying to make believe he thought it all stuff and nonsense. The Portuguese touched his forelock. 'Do you remember, sir,' said he, 'what was the latitude and longitude when you took your observation to-day?' 'Yes,' said the other, 'it was 15° north and 90° east.' The Portuguese nodded his head. 'That's just about the spot, sir—just about. I can't say exactly where the spot is, but it's just about here, and we've struck it. There isn't a native seaman on any of these coasts that would sail over that point, if he knowed it and could help it, for that's the spot where the Water-devil lives.'

"It made me jump to hear the grunt that went through that crowd when he said this, but nobody asked any questions, and he went on. 'This here Water-devil,' said he, 'is about as big as six whales, and in shape very like an oyster without its shell, and he fastens himself to the rocks at the bottom with a million claws. Right out of the middle of him there grows up a long arm that reaches to the top of the water, and at the end of this arm is a fist about the size of a yawl-boat, with fifty-two fingers to it, with each one of them covered with little suckers that will stick fast to anything—iron, wood, stone, or flesh. All that this Water-devil gets to eat is what happens to come swimmin' or sailin' along where he can reach it, and it doesn't matter to him whether it's a shark, or a porpoise, or a shipful of people, and when he takes a grab of anything, that thing never gets away.'

"About this time there were five or six men on their knees saying their prayers, such as they were, and a good many others looked as if they were just about to drop.

"'Now, when this Water-devil gets hold of a ship,' the old fellow went on, 'he don't generally pull her straight down to the bottom, but holds on to it till he counts his claws, and sees that they are all fastened to the rocks; for if a good many of them wasn't fastened he might pull himself loose, instead of pulling the ship down, and then he'd be a goner, for he'd be towed away, and like as not put in a museum. But when he is satisfied that he's moored fast and strong, then he hauls on his arm, and down comes the ship, no matter how big she is. As the ship is sinkin' he turns her over, every now and then, keel uppermost, and gives her a shake, and when the people drop out he sucks them into a sort of funnel, which is his mouth.'

"'Does he count fast?' asked one of the men, this being the first question that had been asked.

"'I've heard,' said the Portuguese, 'that he's a rapid calculator, and the minute he's got to his millionth claw, and finds it's hooked tight and fast, he begins to haul down the ship.'"

At this point the marine stopped and glanced around at the little group. The blacksmith's wife and daughter had put down their work, and were gazing at him with an air of horrified curiosity. The blacksmith held his pipe in his hand, and regarded the narrator with the steadiness and impassiveness of an anvil. The schoolmaster was listening with the greatest eagerness. He was an enthusiast on natural history and mythology, and had written an article for a weekly paper on the reconciliation of the beasts of tradition with the fauna of to-day. Mr. Harberry was not looking at the marine. His eyes were fixed upon the schoolmaster.

"Mr. Cardly," said he, "did you ever read of an animal like that?"

"I cannot say that I have," was his reply. "But it is certain that there are many strange creatures, especially in the sea, of which scientists are comparatively ignorant."

"Such as the sea-serpent," added the marine, quickly, "and a great many other monsters who are not in the books, but who have a good time at the bottom of the sea, all the same. Well, to go on with my story, you must understand that, though this Portuguese spoke broken English, which I haven't tried to give you, he made himself perfectly plain to all of us, and I can assure you that when he got through talking there was a shaky lot of men on that deck.

"The chief officer said he would go below and see how the captain was getting on, and the crew huddled together in the bow, and began whispering among themselves, as if they were afraid the Water-devil would hear them. I turned to walk aft, feeling pretty queer, I can tell you, when I saw Miss Minturn just coming up from the cabin below.

"I haven't said anything about Miss Minturn, but she and her father, who was an elderly English gentleman and an invalid, who had never left his berth since we took him up at Singapore, were our only passengers, except, of course, myself. She was a beautiful girl, with soft blue eyes and golden hair, and a little pale from constantly staying below to nurse her father.

"Of course, I had had little or nothing to say to her, for her father was a good deal of a swell and I was only a marine. But now she saw me standing there by myself, and she came right up to me. 'Can you tell me, sir,' she said, 'if anything else has happened? They are making a great din in the engine-room. I have been looking out of our port, and the vessel seems to me to be stationary.' She stopped at that, and waited to hear what I had to say, but I assure you I would have liked to have her go on talking for half an hour. Her voice was rich and sweet, like that of so many Englishwomen, although, I am happy to say, a great many of my countrywomen have just as good voices, and when I meet any of them for the first time, I generally give them the credit of talking in soft and musical notes, even though I have not had the pleasure of hearing them speak."

"Look here," said the blacksmith, "can't you skip the girl and get back to the Devil?"

"No," said the marine, "I couldn't do that. The two are mixed together, so to speak, so that I have to tell you of both of them."

"You don't mean to say," exclaimed Mrs. Fryker, speaking for the first time, and by no means in soft and musical tones, "that he swallowed her?"

"I'll go on with the story," said the marine. "That's the best way, and everything will come up in its place. Now, of course, I wasn't going to tell this charming young woman, with a sick father, anything about the Water-devil, though what reason to give her for our standing still there I couldn't imagine; but, of course, I had to speak, and I said, 'Don't be alarmed, miss. We have met with an unavoidable detention. That sort of thing often happens in navigation. I can't explain it to you, but you see the ship is perfectly safe and sound, and she is merely under sail instead of having her engines going.'

"'I understood about that,' said she, 'and father and I were both perfectly satisfied, for he said that if we had a good breeze we would not be long in reaching Calcutta. But we seem to have a breeze, and yet we don't go.' 'You'll notice,' said I, 'that the sails are not all set, and for some reason the wind does not serve. When the engines are mended, we shall probably go spinning along.' She looked as if she was trying to appear satisfied. 'Thank you, sir,' she said. 'I hope we may shortly proceed on our way, but in the meantime I shall not say anything to my father about this detention. I think he has not noticed it.' 'That would be very wise,' I replied, and as she turned toward the companionway I was wild to say to her that it would be a lot better for her to stay on deck and get some good fresh air, instead of cooping herself up in that close cabin. But I didn't know her well enough for that."

"Now that you are through with the girl," said the blacksmith, "what did the Devil do?"

"I haven't got to him yet," said the marine, "but after Miss Minturn went below I began to think of him, and the more I thought of him, the less I liked him. I think the chief officer must have told the men below about the Water-devil, for pretty soon the while kit and boodle of them left their work and came on deck, skipper and all. They told me they had given up the engine as a bad job, and I thought to myself that most likely they were all too nervous to rightly know what they were about. The captain threw out the log again, but it floated alongside like a cork on a fishing-line, and at this he turned pale and walked away from the ship's side, forgetting to pull it in again.

"It was now beginning to grow dark, and as nobody seemed to think about supper, I went below to look into that matter. It wouldn't do for Miss Minturn and her father to go without their regular meal, for that would be sure to scare them to death; and if I'm to have a big scare, I like to take it on a good square meal. So I went below to see about it. But I wasn't needed, for Miss Minturn's maid, who was an elderly woman, and pretty sharp-set in her temper, was in the cook's galley superintending supper for her people, and after she got through I superintended some for myself.

"After that I felt a good deal bolder, and I lighted a pipe and went on deck. There I found the whole ship's company, officers and crew, none of them doing anything, and most of them clustered together in little groups, whispering or grunting.

"I went up to the captain and asked him what he was going to do next. 'Do?' said he. 'There is nothing to do. I've done everything that I can do. I'm all upset. I don't know whether I am myself or some other man.' And with that he walked away.

"I sat there and smoked, and looked at them, and I can tell you the sight wasn't cheerful. There was the ship, just as good and sound, as far as anybody could see, as anything that floated on the ocean, and here were all her people, shivering and shaking, and not speaking above their breath, looking for all the world, under the light of the stars and the ship's lamps, which some of them had had sense enough to light, as if they expected in the course of the next half-hour to be made to walk the plank; and, to tell the truth, what they were afraid of would come to pretty much the same thing."

"Mr. Cardly," here interrupted Mr. Harberry, "how long does it take to count a million?"

"That depends," said the schoolmaster, "on the rapidity of the calculator. Some calculators count faster than others. An ordinary boy, counting two hundred a minute, would require nearly three days and a half to count a million."

"Very good," said Mr. Harberry. "Please go on with your story, sir."

"Of course," said the marine, "there is a great difference between a boy and a water-devil, and it is impossible for anybody to know how fast the latter can count, especially as he may be supposed to be used to it. Well, I couldn't stand it any longer on deck, and having nothing else to do, I turned in and went to sleep."

"To sleep! Went to sleep!" exclaimed Mrs. Fryker. "I don't see how you could have done that."

"Ah, madam," said the marine, "we soldiers of the sea are exposed to all sorts of dangers,—combination dangers, you might call them,—and in the course of time we get used to it. If we didn't we couldn't do our duty.

"As the ship had been in its present predicament for six or seven hours, and nothing had happened, there was no reason to suppose that things would not remain as they were for six or seven hours more, in which time I might get a good sleep, and be better prepared for what might come. There's nothing like a good meal and a good sleep as a preparation for danger.

"It was daylight when I awakened, and rapidly glancing about me, I saw that everything appeared to be all right. Looking out of the port-hole, I could see that the vessel was still motionless. I hurried on deck, and was greatly surprised to find nobody there —no one on watch, no one at the wheel, no one anywhere. I ran down into the fo'c'sle, which is the sailors' quarters, but not a soul could I see. I called, I whistled, I searched everywhere, but no one answered. I could find no one. Then I dashed up on deck, and glared around me. Every boat was gone.

"Now I knew what had happened: the cowardly rascals, from captain to cook, had deserted the ship in the night, and I had been left behind!

"For some minutes I stood motionless, wondering how men could be so unfeeling as to do such a thing. I soon became convinced, from what I had seen of the crew, that they had not all gone off together—that there had been no concerted action. A number of them had probably quietly lowered a boat and sneaked away. Then another lot had gone off, hoping their mates would not hear them and therefore crowd into their boat. And so they had all departed, not one boat-load thinking of anybody but themselves, or, if they thought at all about others, quieting their consciences by supposing that there were enough boats on the vessel, and that the other people were as likely to get off as they were.

"Suddenly I thought of the other passengers. Had they been left behind? I ran down below, and I had scarcely reached the bottom of the steps when I met Miss Minturn's maid. 'It seems to me,' she said sharply, 'that the people on this ship are neglecting their duty. There's nobody in the kitchen, and I want some gruel.' 'My good woman,' said I, 'who do you want it for?' 'Who!' she replied. 'Why, for Mr. Minturn, of course; and Miss Minturn may like some, too.'

"Then I knew that all the passengers had been left behind!

"'If you want any gruel,' said I, 'you will have to go into the galley and make it yourself.' And then in a low tone I told her what had happened, for I knew that it would be much better for me to do this than for her to find it out for herself. Without a word she sat right down on the floor, and covered her head with her apron. 'Now, don't make a row,' said I, 'and frighten your master and mistress to death. We're all right so far, and all you've got to do is to take care of Mr. and Miss Minturn, and cook their meals. The steamer is tight and sound, and it can't be long before some sort of a craft will come by and take us off.' I left her sniffling, with her apron over her head, but when I came back, ten minutes afterwards, she was in the galley making gruel.

"I don't think you will be surprised, my friends," continued the marine, "when I tell you that I now found myself in a terrible state of mind. Of course, I hadn't felt very jovial since the steamer had been so wonderfully stopped, but when the captain and all the crew were aboard, I had that sort of confidence which comes from believing that when there are people about whose duty it is to do things, when the time comes to do the things, they will do them. But now, practically speaking, there was nobody but me. The others on board were not to be counted, except as encumbrances. In truth, I was alone—alone with the Water-devil!

"The moment I found no one to depend upon but myself, and that I was deserted in the midst of this lonely mass of water, in that moment did my belief in the Water-devil begin to grow. When I first heard of the creature, I didn't consider that it was my business either to believe in it, or not to believe in it, and I could let the whole thing drop out of my mind, if I chose. But now it was a different matter. I was bound to think for myself, and the more I thought, the more I believed in the Water-devil.

"The fact was, there wasn't anything else to believe in. I had gone over the whole question, and the skipper had gone all over it, and everybody else had gone all over it, and no one could think of anything but a water-devil that could stop a steamer in this way in the middle of the Bay of Bengal, and hold her there hour after hour, in spite of wind and wave and tide. It could not be anything but the monster the Portuguese had told us of, and all I now could do was to wonder whether, when he was done counting his million claws, he would be able to pull down a vessel of a thousand tons, for that was about the size of the *General Brooks.*

"I think I should now have begun to lose my wits if it had not been for one thing, and that was the coming of Miss Minturn on deck. The moment I saw her lovely face I stiffened up wonderfully. 'Sir,' said she, 'I would like to see the captain.' 'I am representing the captain, miss,' I said, with a bow. 'What is it that I can do for you?' 'I want to speak to him about the steward,' she said. 'I think he is neglecting his duty.' 'I also represent the steward,' I replied. 'Tell me what you wish of him.' She made no answer to this, but looked about her in a startled way. 'Where are all the men?' she said. 'Miss Minturn,' said I, 'I represent the crew—in fact, I represent the whole ship's company except the cook, and his place must be taken by your maid.' 'What do you mean?' she asked, looking at me with her wide-opened, beautiful eyes.

"Then, as there was no help for it, I told her everything, except that I did not mention the Water-devil in connection with our marvellous stoppage. I only said that that was caused by something which nobody understood.

"She did not sit down and cover her head, nor did she scream or faint. She turned pale, but looked steadily at me, and her voice did not shake as she asked me what was to be done. 'There is nothing to be done,' I answered, 'but to keep up good hearts, eat three meals a day, and wait until a ship comes along and takes us off.'

"She stood silent for about three minutes. 'I think,' she then said, 'that I will not yet tell my father what has happened,' and she went below.

"Now, strange to say, I walked up and down the deck with my hat cocked on one side and my hands in my pockets, feeling a great deal better. I did not like water-devils any more than I did before, and I did not believe in this one any less than I did before, but, after all, there was some good about him. It seems odd, but the arm of this submarine monster, over a mile long, for all that I knew, was a bond of union between the lovely Miss Minturn and me. She was a lady, I was a marine. So far as I knew anything about bonds of union, there wasn't one that could have tackled itself to us two, except this long, slippery arm of the Water-devil, with one end in the monstrous flob at the bottom, and the other fast to our ship.

"There was no doubt about it: if it hadn't been for that Water-devil, she would have been no more to me than the Queen of Madagascar was. But, under the circumstances, if I wasn't everything to her, who could be anything—that is, if one looked at the matter from a practical point of view?"

The blacksmith made a little movement of impatience. "Suppose you cut all that," said he. "I don't care about the bond of union. I want to know what happened to the ship."

"It is likely," said the marine, "if I could have cut the bond of union that I spoke of, that is to say, the Water-devil's arm, that I would have done it, hoping that I might safely float off somewhere with Miss Minturn. But I couldn't cut it then, and I can't cut it now. That bond is part of my story, and it must all go on together.

"I now set myself to work to do what I thought ought to be done under the circumstances, but, of course, that wasn't very much. I hoisted a flag upside down, and, after considering the matter, I concluded to take in all the sails that had been set. I thought that a steamer without smoke coming from her funnel, and no sails set, would be more likely to attract attention from distant vessels than if she appeared to be under sail.

"I am not a regular sailor, as I said before, but I got out on the yard, and cut the square-sail loose and let it drop on the deck, and I let the jib come down on a run, and managed to bundle it up someway on the bowsprit. This sort of thing took all the nautical gymnastics that I was master of, and entirely occupied my mind, so that I found myself whistling while I worked. I hoped Miss Minturn heard me whistle, because it would not only give her courage, but would let her see that I was not a man who couldn't keep up his spirits in a case like this.

"When that work was over, I began to wonder what I should do next, and then an idea struck me. 'Suppose,' thought I, 'that we are not stationary, but that we are in some queer kind of a current, and that the water, ship, and all are steadily moving on together, so that after a while we shall come in sight of land, or into the track of vessels!'

"I instantly set about to find out if this was the case. It was about noon, and it so happened that on the day before, when the chief officer took his observation, I was seized with a desire to watch him and see how he did it. I don't see why I should have had this notion, but I had it, and I paid the strictest attention to the whole business, calculation part and all, and I found out exactly how it was done.

"Well, then, I went and got the quadrant,—that's the thing they do it with,—and I took an observation, and I found that we were in latitude 15° north, 90° east, exactly where we had been twenty-four hours before!

"When I found out this, I turned so faint that I wanted to sit down and cover up my head. The Water-devil had us—there was no mistake about it, and no use trying to think of anything else. I staggered along the deck, went below, and cooked myself a meal. In a case like this there's nothing like a square meal to keep a man up.

"I know you don't like to hear her mentioned," said the marine, turning to the blacksmith, "but I am bound to say that in course of the afternoon Miss Minturn came on deck several times, to ask if anything new had happened, and if I had seen a vessel. I showed her all that I had done, and told her I was going to hang out lights at night, and did everything I could to keep her on deck as long as possible; for it was easy to see that she needed fresh air, and I needed company. As long as I was talking to her I didn't care a snap of my finger for the Water-devil. It is queer what an influence a beautiful woman has on a man, but it's so, and there's no use arguing about it. She said she had been puzzling her brains to find out what had stopped us, and she supposed it must be that we had run on to a shallow place and stuck fast in the mud, but thought it wonderful that there should be such a place so far from land. I agreed with her that it was wonderful, and added that that was probably the reason the captain and the crew had been seized with a panic. But sensible people like herself and her father, I said, ought not to be troubled by such an occurrence, especially as the vessel remained in a perfectly sound condition.

"She said that her father was busily engaged in writing his memoirs, and that his mind was so occupied, he had not concerned himself at all about our situation—that is, if he had noticed that we were not moving. 'If he wants to see the steward, or anybody else,' I said, 'please call upon me. You know, I represent the whole ship's company, and I shall be delighted to do anything for him or for you.' She thanked me very much and went below.

"She came up again, after this, but her maid came with her, and the two walked on deck for a while. I didn't have much to say to them that time. But just before dark Miss Minturn came on deck alone, and walked forward, where I happened to be. 'Sir,' said she, and her voice trembled a little as she spoke, 'if anything should happen, will you promise me that you will try to save my father?' You can't imagine how these touching words from this beautiful woman affected me. 'My dear lady,' said I, and I hope she did not take offence at the warmth of my expression, 'I don't see how anything can happen. But I promise you, on the word of a sea-soldier, that if danger should come upon us, I will save not only your father, but yourself and your maid. Trust me for that.'

"The look she gave me when I said these words, and especially the flash of her eye when I spoke of my being a sea-soldier, made me feel strong enough to tear that sea-monster's arm in twain, and to sail away with the lovely creature for whom my heart was beginning to throb."

"It's a pity," said the blacksmith, "that you hadn't jumped into the water while the fit was on you, and done the tearing."

"A man often feels strong enough to do a thing," said the marine, "and yet doesn't care to try to do it, and that was my case at that time. But I vowed to myself that if the time came when there was any saving to be done, I'd attend to Miss Minturn, even if I had to neglect the rest of the family.

"She didn't make any answer, but she gave me her hand, and she couldn't have done anything I liked better than that. I held it as long as I could, which wasn't very long, and then she went down to her father."

"Glad of it," said the blacksmith.

"When I had had my supper, and had smoked my pipe, and everything was still, and I knew I shouldn't see anybody any more that night, I began to have the quakes and the shakes. If even I had had the maid to talk to, it would have been a comfort. But in the way of faithfully attending to her employers that woman was a trump. She cooked for them, and did for them, and stuck by them straight along, so she hadn't any time for chats with me.

"Being alone, I couldn't help all the time thinking about the Water-devil, and although it seems a foolish thing now that I look back on it, I set to work to calculate how long it would take him to count his feet. I made it about the same time as you did, sir," nodding to the schoolmaster, "only I considered that if he counted twelve hours, and slept and rested twelve hours, that would make it seven days, which would give me a good long time with Miss Minturn, and that would be the greatest of joys to me, no matter what happened afterwards.

"But then, nobody could be certain that the monster at the bottom of the bay needed rest or sleep. He might be able to count without stopping, and how did I know that he couldn't check off four hundred claws a minute? If that happened to be the case, our time must be nearly up.

"When that idea came into my head, I jumped up and began to walk about. What could I do? I certainly ought to be ready to do something when the time came. I thought of getting life-preservers and strapping one on each of us, so that if the Water-devil turned over the vessel and shook us out, we shouldn't sink down to him, but would float on the surface.

"But then the thought struck me that if he should find the vessel empty of live creatures, and should see us floating around on the top, all he had to do was to let go of the ship and grab us, one at a time. When I thought of a fist as big as a yawl-boat clapping its fifty-two fingers on me, it sent a shiver through my bones. The fact was, there wasn't anything to do, and so after a while I managed to get asleep, which was a great comfort."

"Mr. Cardly," said Mr. Harberry to the schoolmaster, "what reason can you assign why a sea-monster, such as has been described to us, should neglect to seize upon several small boats filled with men who were escaping from a vessel which it held in custody?"

"I do not precisely see," answered Mr. Cardly, "why these men should have been allowed this immunity, but I—"

"Oh, that is easily explained," interrupted the marine, "for, of course, the Water-devil could not know that a lot more people were not left in the ship, and if he let go his hold on her, to try and grab a boat that was moving as fast as men could row it, the steamer might get out of his reach, and he mightn't have another chance for a hundred years to make fast to a vessel. No, sir, a creature like that isn't apt to take any wild chances, when he's got hold of a really good thing. Anyway, we were held tight and fast, for at twelve o'clock the next day I took another observation, and there we were, in the same latitude and longitude that we had been in for two days. I took the captain's glass, and I looked all over the water of that bay, which, as I think I have said before, was all the same as the ocean, being somewhere about a thousand miles wide. Not a sail, not a puff of smoke, could I see. It must have been a slack season for navigation, or else we were out of the common track of vessels. I had never known that the Bay of Bengal was so desperately lonely.

"It seems unnatural, and I can hardly believe it when I look back on it, but it's a fact that I was beginning to get used to the situation. We had plenty to eat, the weather was fine—in fact, there was now only breeze enough to make things cool and comfortable. I was head man on that vessel, and Miss Minturn might come on deck at any moment, and as long as I could forget that there was a water-devil fastened to the bottom of the vessel, there was no reason why I should not be perfectly satisfied with things as they were. And if things had stayed as they were for two or three months, I should have been right well pleased, especially since Miss Minturn's maid, by order of her mistress, had begun to cook my meals, which she did in a manner truly first-class. I believed then, and I stand to it now, that there is no better proof of a woman's good feeling toward a man than for her to show an interest in his meals. That's the sort of sympathy that comes home to a man, and tells on him, body and soul."

As the marine made this remark, he glanced at the blacksmith's daughter. But that young lady had taken up her sewing, and appeared to be giving it her earnest attention. He then went on with his story:

"But things did not remain as they were. The next morning, about half an hour after breakfast, I was walking up and down the upper deck, smoking my pipe, and wondering when Miss Minturn would be coming up to talk to me about the state of affairs, when suddenly I felt the deck beneath me move with a quick, sharp jerk, something like, I imagine, a small shock of an earthquake.

"Never, in all my life, did the blood run so cold in my veins; my legs trembled so that I could scarcely stand. I knew what had happened—the Water-devil had begun to haul upon the ship!

"I was in such a state of collapse that I did not seem to have any power over my muscles. But, for all that, I heard Miss Minturn's voice at the foot of the companionway, and knew that she was coming on deck. In spite of the dreadful awfulness of that moment, I felt it would never do for her to see me in the condition I was in, and so, shuffling and half tumbling, I got forward, went below, and made my way to the steward's room, where I had already discovered some spirits, and I took a good dram; for although I am not by any means a habitual drinker, being principled against that sort of thing, there are times when a man needs the support of some good brandy or whiskey.

"In a few minutes I felt more like myself, and went on deck, and there was Miss Minturn, half scared to death. 'What is the meaning of that shock?' she said. 'Have we struck anything?' 'My dear lady,' said I, with as cheerful a front as I could put on, 'I do not think we have struck anything. There is nothing to strike.' She looked at me for a moment like an angel ready to cry, and, clasping her hands, she said, 'Oh, tell me, sir, I pray you, sir, tell me what has happened. My father felt that shock. He sent me to inquire about it. His mind is disturbed.' At that moment, before I could make an answer, there was another jerk of the ship, and we both went down on our knees, and I felt as if I had been tripped. I was up in a moment, however, but she continued on her knees. I am sure she was praying, but very soon up she sprang. ‘Oh, what is it, what is it?’ she cried. ‘I must go to my father.’ ‘I cannot tell you,’ said I. ‘I do not know. But don’t be frightened. How can such a little shock hurt so big a ship?’

“It was all very well to tell her not to be frightened, but when she ran below she left on deck about as frightened a man as ever stood in shoes. There could be no doubt about it. That horrible beast was beginning to pull upon the ship. Whether or not it would be able to draw us down below was a question which must soon be solved.

“I had had a small opinion of the maid, who, when I told her the crew had deserted the ship, had sat down and covered her head. But now I did pretty much the same thing. I crouched on the deck and pulled my cap over my eyes. I felt that I did not wish to see, hear, or feel anything.

“I had sat in this way for about half an hour, and had felt no more shocks, when a slight gurgling sound came to my ears. I listened for a moment, then sprang to my feet. Could we be moving? I ran to the side of the ship. The gurgle seemed to be coming from the stern. I hurried there and looked over. The wheel had been lashed fast, and the rudder stood straight out behind us. On each side of it there was a ripple in the quiet water. We were moving, and we were moving backward!

“Overpowered by horrible fascination, I stood grasping the rail and looking over at the water beneath me, as the vessel moved slowly and steadily onward, stern foremost. In spite of the upset condition of my mind, I could not help wondering why the vessel should move in this way.

"There was only one explanation possible: the Water-devil was walking along the bottom, and towing us after him! Why he should pull us along in this way I could not imagine, unless he was making for his home in some dreadful cave at the bottom, into which he would sink, dragging us down after him.

"While my mind was occupied with these horrible subjects, some one touched me on the arm, and turning, I saw Miss Minturn. 'Are we not moving?' she said. 'Yes,' I answered, 'we certainly are.' 'Do you not think,' she then asked, 'that we may have been struck by a powerful current, which is now carrying us onward?' I did not believe this, for there was no reason to suppose that there were currents which wandered about, starting off vessels with a jerk, but I was glad to think that this idea had come into her head, and said that it was possible that this might be the case. 'And now we are going somewhere,' she said, speaking almost cheerfully. 'Yes, we are,' I answered, and I had to try hard not to groan as I said the words. 'And where do you think we are going?' she asked. It was altogether out of my power to tell that sweet creature that, in my private opinion, she, at least, was going to heaven, and so I answered that I really did not know. 'Well,' she said, 'if we keep moving, we're bound at last to get near land, or to some place where ships would pass near us.'

"There is nothing in this world," said the marine, "which does a man so much good in time of danger as to see a hopeful spirit in a woman—that is, a woman that he cares about. Some of her courage comes to him, and he is better and stronger for having her alongside of him."

Having made this remark, the speaker again glanced at the blacksmith's daughter. She had put down her work and was looking at him with an earnest brightness in her eyes.

"Yes," he continued, "it is astonishing what a change came over me as I stood by the side of that noble girl. She was a born lady, I was a marine, just the same as we had been before, but there didn't seem to be the difference between us that there had been. Her words, her spirits, everything about her, in fact, seemed to act on me, to elevate me, to fill my soul with noble sentiments, to make another man of me. Standing there beside her, I felt myself her equal. In life or death I would not be ashamed to say, 'Here I am, ready to stand by you, whatever happens.'"

Having concluded this sentiment, the marine again glanced toward the blacksmith's daughter. Her eyes were slightly moist, and her face was glowing with a certain enthusiasm.

"Look here," said the blacksmith, "I suppose that woman goes along with you into the very maw of the sunken Devil, but I do wish you could take her more for granted, and get on faster with the real part of the story."

"One part is as real as another," said the marine. "But on we go, and on we did go for the whole of the rest of that day, at the rate of about half a knot an hour, as near as I could guess at it. The weather changed, and a dirty sort of fog came down on us, so that we couldn't see far in any direction.

"Why that Water-devil should keep on towing us, and where he was going to take us, were things I didn't dare to think about. The fog did not prevent me from seeing the water about our stern, and I leaned over the rail, watching the ripples that flowed on each side of the rudder, which showed that we were still going at about the same uniform rate.

"But toward evening the gurgling beneath me ceased, and I could see that the rudder no longer parted the quiet water, and that we had ceased to move. A flash of hope blazed up within me. Had the Water-devil found the ship too heavy a load, and had he given up the attempt to drag it to its under-ocean cave? I went below and had my supper. I was almost a happy man. When Miss Minturn came to ask me how we were getting along, I told her that I thought we were doing very well indeed. I did not mention that we had ceased to move, for she thought that a favorable symptom. She went back to her quarters greatly cheered up—not so much, I think, from my words as from my joyful aspect, for I did feel jolly, there was no doubt about it. If that Water-devil had let go of us, I was willing to take all the other chances that might befall a ship floating about loose on the Bay of Bengal.

"The fog was so thick that night that it was damp and unpleasant on deck, and so, having hung out and lighted a couple of lanterns, I went below for a comfortable smoke in the captain's room. I was puffing away here at my ease, with my mind filled with happy thoughts of two or three weeks with Miss Minturn on this floating paradise, where she was bound to see a good deal of me, and couldn't help liking me better, and depending on me more and more every day, when I felt a little jerking shock. It was the same thing that we had felt before. The Water-devil still had hold of us!

"I dropped my pipe, my chin fell upon my breast, I shivered all over. In a few moments I heard the maid calling to me, and then she ran into the room. 'Miss Minturn wants to know, sir,' she said, 'if you think that shock is a sudden twist in the current which is carrying us on?' I straightened myself up as well as I could, and in the dim light I do not think she noticed my condition. I answered that I thought it was something of that sort, and she went away.

"'More likely a twist of the Devil's arm,' I thought, as I sat there alone in my misery.

"In ten or fifteen minutes there came two shocks, not very far apart. This showed that the creature beneath us was at work in some way or other. Perhaps he had reached the opening of his den, and was shortening up his arm before he plunged down into it with us after him. I couldn't stay any longer in that room alone. I looked for the maid, but she had put out the galley light, and had probably turned in for the night.

"I went up, and looked out on deck, but everything was horribly dark and sticky and miserable there. I noticed that my lanterns were not burning, and then I remembered that I had not filled them. But this did not trouble me. If a vessel came along and saw our lights, she would probably keep away from us, and I would have been glad to have a vessel come to us, even if she ran into us. Our steamer would probably float long enough for us to get on board the other one, and almost anything would be better than being left alone in this dreadful place, at the mercy of the Water-devil.

"Before I left the deck I felt another shock. This took out of me whatever starch was left, and I shuffled below and got to my bunk, where I tumbled in and covered myself up, head and all. If there had been any man to talk to, it would have been different, but I don't know when I ever felt more deserted than I did at that time.

"I tried to forget the awful situation in which I was. I tried to think of other things—to imagine that I was drilling with the rest of my company, with Tom Rogers on one side of me, and old Humphrey Peters on the other. You may say, perhaps, that this wasn't exactly the way of carrying out my promise of taking care of Miss Minturn and the others. But what was there to do? When the time came to do anything, and I could see what to do, I was ready to do it, but there was no use of waking them up now and setting their minds on edge, when they were all comfortable in their beds, thinking that every jerk of the Devil's arm was a little twist in the current that was carrying them to Calcutta or some other desirable port.

"I felt some shocks after I got into bed, but whether or not there were many in the night, I don't know, for I went to sleep. It was daylight when I awoke, and jumping out of my bunk, I dashed on deck. Everything seemed pretty much as it had been, and the fog was as thick as ever. I ran to the stern and looked over, and I could scarcely believe my eyes when I saw that we were moving again, still stern foremost, but a little faster than before. That beastly Water-devil had taken a rest for the night, and had probably given us the shocks by turning over in his sleep, and now he was off again, making up for lost time.

"Pretty soon Miss Minturn came on deck, and bade me good morning, and then she went and looked over the stern. 'We are still moving on,' she said, with a smile, 'and the fog doesn't seem to make any difference. It surely cannot be long before we get somewhere.' 'No, miss,' said I, 'it cannot be very long.' 'You look tired,' she said, 'and I don't wonder, for you must feel the heavy responsibility on you. I have told my maid to prepare breakfast for you in our cabin. I want my father to know you, and I think it is a shame that you, the only protector that we have, should be shut off so much by yourself, so after this we shall eat together.' 'After this,' I groaned to myself, 'we shall be eaten together.' At that moment I did not feel that I wanted to breakfast with Miss Minturn."

"Mr. Cardly," said Mr. Harberry to the schoolmaster, "have you ever read, in any of your scientific books, that the Bay of Bengal is subject to heavy fogs that last day after day?"

"I cannot say," answered the schoolmaster, "that my researches into the geographical distribution of fogs have resulted—"

"As to fogs," interrupted the marine, "you can't get rid of them, you know. If you had been in the habit of going to sea, you would know that you are likely to run into a fog at any time, and in any weather. And as to lasting, they are just as likely to last for days as for hours. It wasn't the fog that surprised me. I did not consider that of any account at all. I had enough other things to occupy my mind." And having settled this little matter, he went on with his story:

"Well, my friends, I did not breakfast with Miss Minturn and her father. Before that meal was ready, and while I was standing alone at the stern, I saw coming out of the water, a long way off in the fog, which must have been growing thinner about this time, a dark and mysterious object, apparently without any shape or form. This sight made the teeth chatter in my head. I had expected to be pulled down to the Water-devil, but I had never imagined that he would come up to us!

"While my eyes were glued upon this apparition I could see that we were approaching it. When I perceived this, I shut my eyes and turned my back—I could look upon it no longer. My mind seemed to forsake me. I did not even try to call out and give the alarm to the others. Why should I? What could they do?"

"If it had been me," said Mrs. Fryker, in a sort of gasping whisper, "I should have died right there."

The marine turned his eyes in the direction of the blacksmith's daughter. She was engaged with her work, and was not looking at him.

"I cannot say," he continued, "that, had Miss Minturn been there at that moment, I would not have declared that I was ready to die for her or with her. But there was no need of trying to keep up her courage. That was all right. She knew nothing of our danger. That terrible knowledge pressed on me alone. Is it wonderful that a human soul should sink a little under such an awful load?"

Without turning to observe the effect of these last words, the marine went on:

"Suddenly I heard behind me a most dreadful sound. 'Good heavens!' I exclaimed, 'can a water-devil bray?'

"The sound was repeated. Without knowing what I did, I turned. I heard what sounded like words. I saw in the fog the stern of a vessel, with a man above it, shouting to me through a speaking-trumpet.

"I do not know what happened next. My mind must have become confused. When I regained my senses, Miss Minturn, old Mr. Minturn, and the maid were standing by me. The man had stopped shouting from his trumpet, and a boat was being lowered from the other ship. In about ten minutes there were half a dozen men on board of us, all in the uniform of the British navy. I was stiff enough now, and felt myself from top to toe a regular marine in the service of my country. I stepped up to the officer in command and touched my cap.

"He looked at me and my companions in surprise, and then, glancing along the deck, said, 'What has happened to this vessel? Who is in command?'

"I informed him that, strictly speaking, no one was in command, but that I represented the captain, officers, and crew of this steamer, the *General Brooks*, from San Francisco to Calcutta, and I then proceeded to tell him the whole story of our misfortunes, and concluded by telling the officer that if we had not moved since his vessel had come in sight, it was probably because the Water-devil had let go of us, and was preparing to make fast to the other ship, and therefore it would be advisable for us all to get on board his vessel, and steam away as quickly as possible.

"The Englishmen looked at me in amazement. 'Drunk!' ejaculated the officer I had addressed. 'Cracked, I should say,' suggested another. Then spoke up Mr. Minturn. 'I do not understand what I have just heard,' he said. 'What is a water-devil? I am astounded.' 'You never said a word of this to me!' exclaimed Miss Minturn. 'You never told me that we were in the grasp of a water-devil, and that that was the reason the captain and the crew ran away.' 'No,' said I, 'I never divulged the dreadful danger we were in. I allowed you to believe that we were in the influence of a current, and that the shocks we felt were the sudden twists of that current. The terrible truth I kept to myself. Not for worlds would I have made known to a tenderly nurtured lady, to her invalid father, and devoted servant, what might have crushed their souls, driven them to the borders of frenzy, in which case the relief which now has come to us would have been of no avail.'

"The officer stood and steadily stared at me. 'I declare,' he said, 'you do not look like a crazy man. At what time did this Water-devil begin to take you in tow?' 'Yesterday morning,' I answered. 'And he stopped during last night?' he asked. I replied that that was the case. Then he took off his cap, rubbed his head, and stood silent for a minute. 'We'll look into this matter!' he suddenly exclaimed, and turning, he and his party left us to ourselves. The boat was now sent back with a message to the English vessel, and the officers and men who remained scattered themselves over our steamer, examining the engine-room, hold, and every part of her.

"I was very much opposed to all this delay, for, although the Englishmen might doubt the existence of the Water-devil, I saw no reason to do so, and, in any case, I was very anxious to be on the safe side by getting away as soon as possible. But, of course, British officers would not be advised by me, and as I was getting very hungry, I went down to breakfast. I ate this meal alone, for my fellow-passengers seemed to have no desire for food.

"I cannot tell all that happened during the next hour, for, to tell the truth, I did not understand everything that was done. The boat passed several times between the two vessels, bringing over a number of men—two of them scientific fellows, I think. Another was a diver, whose submarine suit and air-pumping machines came over with him. He was lowered over the side, and after he had been down about fifteen minutes he was hauled up again, and down below was the greatest hammering and hauling that ever you heard. The *General Brooks* was put in charge of an officer and some men, a sail was hoisted to keep her in hand, so that she wouldn't drift into the other ship, and in the midst of all the rowdydow we were told that if we liked we might go on board the English vessel immediately.

"Miss Minturn and her party instantly accepted this invitation, and although under ordinary circumstances I would have remained to see for myself what these people found out, I felt a relief in the thought of leaving that vessel which is impossible for me to express, and I got into the boat with the others.

"We were treated very handsomely on board the English vessel, which was a mail-steamship, at that time in the employment of the English government. I told my story at least half a dozen times, sometimes to the officers and sometimes to the men, and whether they believed me or not, I don't think any one ever created a greater sensation with a story of the sea.

"In an hour or so the officer in charge of the operations on the *General Brooks* came aboard. As he passed me on his way to the captain, he said, 'We found your Water-devil, my man.' 'And he truly had us in tow?' I cried. 'Yes, you are perfectly correct,' he said, and went on to make his report to the captain."

"Now, then," said the blacksmith, "I suppose we are going to get to the p'int. What did he report?"

"I didn't hear his report," said the marine, "but everybody soon knew what had happened to our unlucky vessel, and I can give you the whole story of it. The *General Brooks* sailed from San Francisco to Calcutta with a cargo of stored electricity, contained in large, strongly made boxes. This I knew nothing about, not being in the habit of inquiring into cargoes. Well, in some way or other, which I don't understand, not being a scientific man myself, a magnetic connection was formed between these boxes, and also, if I got the story straight, between them and the iron hull of our vessel, so that it became, in fact, an enormous floating magnet—one of the biggest things of the kind on record. I have an idea that this magnetic condition was the cause of the trouble to our machinery. Every separate part of it was probably turned to a magnet, and they all stuck together."

"Mr. Cardly," said Mr. Harberry to the schoolmaster, "I do not suppose you have given much attention to the study of commerce, and therefore are not prepared to give us any information in regard to stored electricity as an article of export from this country. But perhaps you can tell us what stored electricity is, and how it is put into boxes."

"In regard to the transportation," answered the schoolmaster, speaking a little slowly, "of encased electric potency, I cannot—"

"Oh, bless me!" interrupted the marine, "that is all simple enough. You can store electricity and send it all over the world, if you like. In places like Calcutta, I think it must be cheaper to buy it than to make it. They use it as a motive power for sewing-machines, apple-parers, and it can be used in a lot of ways, such as digging post-holes and churning butter. When the stored electricity in a box is all used up, all you have to do is to connect a fresh box with your machinery, and there you are, ready to start again. There was nothing strange about our cargo. It was the electricity leaking out and uniting itself and the iron ship into a sort of conglomerate magnet that was out of the way."

"Mr. Cardly," said Mr. Harberry, "if an iron ship were magnetized in that manner, wouldn't it have a deranging effect upon the needle of the compass?"

The marine did not give the schoolmaster time to make answer. "Generally speaking," said he, "that sort of thing would interfere with keeping the vessel on its proper course, but with us it didn't make any difference at all. The greater part of the ship was in front of the binnacle, where they keep the compass, and so the needle naturally pointed that way, and as we were going north before a south wind, it was all right.

"Being a floating magnet, of course, did not prevent our sailing, so we went along well enough until we came to longitude 90°, latitude 15° north. Now, it so happened that a telegraphic cable which had been laid down by the British government, to establish communication between Madras and Rangoon, had broken some time before, and not very far from this point.

"Now, you can see for yourselves that when an enormous mass of magnetic iron, in the shape of the *General Brooks*, came sailing along there, the part of that cable which lay under us was so attracted by such a powerful and irresistible force that its broken end raised itself from the bottom of the bay and reached upward until it touched our ship, when it laid itself along our keel, to which it instantly became fastened as firmly as if it had been bolted and riveted there. Then, as the rest of this part of the cable was on the bottom of the bay all the way to Madras, of course we had to stop. That's simple enough. That's the way the Water-devil held us fast in one spot for two days.

"The British government determined not to repair this broken cable, but to take it up and lay down a better one. So they chartered a large steamer, and fitted her up with engines and a big drum that they use for that sort of thing, and set her to work to wind up the Madras end of the broken cable. She had been at this business a good while before we were caught by the other end, and when they got near enough to us for their engines to be able to take up the slack from the bottom between us and them, then, of course, they pulled upon us, and we began to move. And when they lay to for the night, and stopped the winding business, of course we stopped, and the stretch of cable between the two ships had no effect upon us, except when the big mail-steamer happened to move this way or that, as they kept her head to the wind. And that's the way we lay quiet all night except when we got our shocks.

"When they set the drum going again in the morning, it wasn't long before they wound us near enough for them to see us, which they would have done sooner if my lights hadn't gone out so early in the evening."

"And that," said the blacksmith, with a somewhat severe expression on his face, "is all that you have to tell about your wonderful Water-devil!"

"All!" said the marine. "I should say it was quite enough, and nothing could be more wonderful than what really happened. A water-devil is one of two things: he is real, or he's not real. If he's not real, he's no more than an ordinary spook or ghost, and is not to be practically considered. If he's real, then he's a live animal, and can be put in a class with other animals, and described in books, because, even if nobody sees him, the scientific men know how he must be constructed, and then he's no more than a great many other wonderful things which we can see alive, stuffed, or in plaster casts.

"But if you want to put your mind upon something really wonderful, just think of a snake-like rope of wire, five or six hundred miles long, lying down at the very bottom of the great Bay of Bengal, with no more life in it than there is in a ten-penny nail.

"Then imagine that long dead wire snake to be suddenly filled with life, and to know that there was something far up above it, on the surface of the water, that it wants to reach up to and touch. Think of it lifting and flapping its broken end, and then imagine it raising yard after yard of itself up and up, through the solemn water, more and more of it lifting itself from the bottom, curling itself backward and forward as it rises higher and higher, until at last, with a sudden jump that must have ripped a mile or more of it from the bottom, it claps its end against the thing it wants to touch, and which it can neither see, nor hear, nor smell, but which it knows is there. Could there be anything in this world more wonderful than that?

"And then, if that isn't enough of a wonder, think of the Rangoon end of that cable squirming and wriggling and stretching itself out toward our ship, but not being able to reach us on account of a want of slack—just as alive as the Madras part of the cable, and just as savage and frantic to get up to us and lay hold of us. And then, after our vessel had been gradually pulled away from it, think of this other part getting weaker and weaker, minute by minute, until it falls flat on the bay, as dead as any other iron thing!"

The marine ceased to speak, and Mrs. Fryker heaved a sigh.

"It makes me shiver to think of all that down so deep," she said. "But I must say I am disappointed."

"In what way?" asked the marine.

"A water-devil," said she, "as big as six whales, and with a funnelly mouth to suck in people, is different. But, of course, after all, it was better as it was."

"Look here," said the blacksmith, "what became of the girl? I wanted her finished up long ago, and you haven't done it yet."

"Miss Minturn, you mean," said the marine. "Well, there is not much to say about her. Things happened in the usual way. When the danger was all over, when she had other people to depend upon besides me, and we were on board a fine steamer, with a lot of handsomely dressed naval officers, and going comfortably to Madras, of course she thought no more of the humble sea-soldier who once stood between her and—nobody knew what. In fact, the only time she spoke to me after we got on board the English steamer, she made me feel, although she didn't say it in words, that she was not at all obliged to me for supposing that she would have been scared to death if I had told her about the Water-devil."

"I suppose," said the blacksmith, "by the time you got back to your ship you had overstayed your leave of absence a good while. Did your captain let you off when you told him this story of the new-fashioned Water-devil?"

The marine smiled. "I never went back to the *Apache*," he said. "When I arrived at Madras I found that she had sailed from Calcutta. It was, of course, useless for me to endeavor to follow her, and I therefore concluded to give up the marine service for a time, and go into another line of business, about which it is too late to tell you now."

"Mr. Cardly," said Mr. Harberry to the schoolmaster, "have you ever read that the British government has a submarine cable from Madras to Rangoon?"

The marine took it upon himself to answer this question. "The cable of which I spoke to you," he said, "was taken up, as I told you, and I never heard that another one was laid. But it is getting late, and I think I will go to bed. I have a long walk before me to-morrow." So saying, he rose, put his pipe upon the mantelpiece, and bade the company good night. As he did so, he fixed his eyes on the blacksmith's daughter. But that young lady did not look at him. She was busily reading the weekly newspaper which her father had left upon the table.

Mr. Harberry now rose, preparatory to going home. As he buttoned up his coat, he looked from one to another of the little group, and remarked: "I have often heard that marines are a class of men who are considered as fit subjects to tell tough stories to, but it strikes me that the time has come when the tables are beginning to be turned."

A TALE OF NEGATIVE GRAVITY

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A TALE OF NEGATIVE GRAVITY

MY wife and I were staying at a small town in northern Italy, and on a certain pleasant afternoon in spring we had taken a walk of six or seven miles to see the sun set behind some low mountains to the west of the town. Most of our walk had been along a hard, smooth highway, and then we had turned into a series of narrower roads, sometimes bordered by walls, and sometimes by light fences of reed or cane. Nearing the mountain, to a low spur of which we intended to ascend, we easily scaled a wall about four feet high, and found ourselves upon pasture-land which led, sometimes by gradual ascents and sometimes by bits of rough climbing, to the spot we wished to reach. We were afraid we were a little late, and therefore hurried on, running up the grassy hills and bounding briskly over the rough and rocky places. I carried a knapsack strapped firmly to my shoulders, and under my wife's arm was a large, soft basket of a kind much used by tourists. Her arm was passed through the handles and around the bottom of the basket, which she pressed closely to her side. This was the way she always carried it. The basket contained two bottles of wine, one sweet for my wife, and another a little acid for myself. Sweet wines give me the headache.

When we reached the grassy bluff, well known thereabouts to lovers of sunset views, I stepped immediately to the edge to gaze upon the scene ; but my wife sat down to take a sip of wine, for she was very thirsty, and then, leaving her basket, she came to my side. The scene was indeed one of great beauty. Beneath us stretched a wide valley of many shades of green, with a little river running through it, and red-tiled houses here and there. Beyond rose a range of mountains, pink, pale green, and purple where their tips caught the reflection of the setting sun, and of a rich gray-green in shadows. Beyond all was the blue Italian sky, illumined by an especially fine sunset.

My wife and I are Americans, and at the time of this story were middle-aged people, and very fond of seeing in each other's company whatever there was of interest or beauty around us. We had a son about twenty-two years old, of whom we were also very fond, but he was not with us, being at that time a student in Germany. Although we had good health, we were not very robust people, and, under ordinary circumstances, not given to long country tramps. I was of medium size, without much muscular development, while my wife was quite stout, and growing stouter.

The reader may, perhaps, be somewhat surprised that a middle-aged couple, not very strong or very good walkers, the lady loaded with a basket containing two bottles of wine and a metal drinking-cup, and the gentleman carrying a heavy knapsack, filled with all sorts of odds and ends, strapped to his shoulders, should set off on a seven-mile walk, jump over a wall, run up a hillside, and yet feel in very good trim to enjoy a sunset view. This peculiar state of things I will proceed to explain.

I had been a professional man, but some years before had retired upon a very comfortable income. I had always been very fond of scientific pursuits, and now made these the occupation and pleasure of much of my leisure time. Our home was in a small town, and in a corner of my grounds I built a laboratory, where I carried on my work and my experiments. I had long been anxious to discover the means, not only of producing, but of retaining and controlling, a natural force, really the same as centrifugal force, but which I called negative gravity. This name I adopted because it indicated better than any other the action of the force in question, as I produced it. Positive gravity attracts everything toward the centre of the earth. Negative gravity, therefore, would be that power which repels everything from the centre of the earth, just as the negative pole of a magnet repels the needle, while the positive pole attracts it. My object was, in fact, to store centrifugal force, and to render it constant, controllable, and available for use. The advantages of such a discovery could scarcely be described. In a word, it would lighten the burdens of the world.

I will not touch upon the labors and disappointments of several years. It is enough to say that at last I discovered a method of producing, storing, and controlling negative gravity.

The mechanism of my invention was rather complicated, but the method of operating it was very simple. A strong metallic case, about eight inches long and half as wide, contained the machinery for producing the force, and this was put into action by means of the pressure of a screw worked from the outside. As soon as this pressure was produced, negative gravity began to be evolved and stored, and the greater the pressure the greater the force. As the screw was moved outward, and the pressure diminished, the force decreased, and when the screw was withdrawn to its fullest extent, the action of negative gravity entirely ceased. Thus this force could be produced or dissipated at will to such degrees as might be desired, and its action, so long as the requisite pressure was maintained, was constant.

When this little apparatus worked to my satisfaction I called my wife into my laboratory and explained to her my invention and its value. She had known that I had been at work with an important object, but I had never told her what it was. I had said that if I succeeded I would tell her all, but if I failed she need not be troubled with the matter at all. Being a very sensible woman, this satisfied her perfectly. Now I explained everything to her, the construction of the machine, and the wonderful uses to which this invention could be applied. I told her that it could diminish, or entirely dissipate, the weight of objects of any kind. A heavily loaded wagon, with two of these instruments fastened to its sides, and each screwed to a proper force, would be so lifted and supported that it would press upon the ground as lightly as an empty cart, and a small horse could draw it with ease. A bale of cotton, with one of these machines attached, could be handled and carried by a boy. A car, with a number of these machines, could be made to rise in the air like a balloon. Everything, in fact, that was heavy could be made light. And as a great part of labor, all over the world, is caused by the attraction of gravitation, so this repellent force, wherever applied, would make weight less and work easier. I told her of many, many ways in which the invention might be used, and would have told her of many more if she had not suddenly burst into tears.

"The world has gained something wonderful," she exclaimed, between her sobs, "but I have lost a husband!"

"What do you mean by that?" I asked, in surprise.

"I haven't minded it so far," she said, "because it gave you something to do, and it pleased you, and it never interfered with our home pleasures and our home life. But now that is all over. You will never be your own master again. It will succeed, I am sure, and you may make a great deal of money, but we don't need money. What we need is the happiness which we have always had until now. Now there will be companies, and patents, and lawsuits, and experiments, and people calling you a humbug, and other people saying they discovered it long ago, and all sorts of persons coming to see you, and you'll be obliged to go to all sorts of places, and you will be an altered man, and we shall never be happy again. Millions of money will not repay us for the happiness we should lose."

These words of my wife struck me with much force. Before I had called her my mind had begun to be filled and perplexed with ideas of what I ought to do now that the great invention was perfected. Until now the matter had not troubled me at all. Sometimes I had gone backward and sometimes forward, but, on the whole, I had always felt encouraged. I had taken great pleasure in the work, but I had never allowed myself to be too much absorbed by it. But now everything was different. I began to feel that it was due to myself and to my fellow-beings that I should properly put this invention before the world. And how should I set about it? What steps should I take? I must make no mistakes. When the matter should become known hundreds of scientific people might set themselves to work. How could I tell but that they might discover other methods of producing the same effect? I must guard myself against a great many things. I must get patents in all parts of the world. Already, as I have said, my mind began to be troubled and perplexed with these things. A turmoil of this sort did not suit my age nor disposition. I could not but agree with my wife that the joys of a quiet and contented life were now about to be broken into.

"My dear," said I, "I believe, with you, that the thing will do us more harm than good. If it were not for depriving the world of the invention, I would throw the whole thing to the winds. And yet," I added regretfully, "I had expected a great deal of personal gratification from the use of this invention."

"Now, listen," said my wife, eagerly. "Don't you think it would be best to do this—use the thing as much as you please for your own amusement and satisfaction, but let the world wait? It has waited a long time, and let it wait a little longer. When we are dead let Herbert have the invention. He will then be old enough to judge for himself whether it will be better to take advantage of it for his own profit, or simply to give it to the public for nothing. It would be cheating him if we were to do the latter, but it would also be doing him a great wrong if we were, at his age, to load him with such a heavy responsibility. Besides, if he took it up, you could not help going into it, too."

I took my wife's advice. I wrote a careful and complete account of the invention, and, sealing it up, I gave it to my lawyers to be handed to my son after my death. If he died first, I would make other arrangements. Then I determined to get all the good and fun out of the thing that was possible without telling any one anything about it. Even Herbert, who was away from home, was not to be told of the invention.

The first thing I did was to buy a strong leather knapsack, and inside of this I fastened my little machine, with a screw so arranged that it could be worked from the outside. Strapping this firmly to my shoulders, my wife gently turned the screw at the back until the upward tendency of the knapsack began to lift and sustain me. When I felt myself so gently supported and upheld that I seemed to weigh about thirty or forty pounds, I would set out for a walk. The knapsack did not raise me from the ground, but it gave me a very buoyant step. It was no labor at all to walk. It was a delight, an ecstasy. With the strength of a man and the weight of a child, I gayly strode along. The first day I walked half a dozen miles at a very brisk pace, and came back without feeling in the least degree tired. These walks now became one of the greatest joys of my life. When nobody was looking, I would bound over a fence, sometimes just touching it with one hand, and sometimes not touching it at all. I delighted in rough places. I sprang over streams. I jumped and I ran. I felt like Mercury himself.

I now set about making another machine, so that my wife could accompany me in my walks. But when it was finished she positively refused to use it. "I can't wear a knapsack," she said, "and there is no other good way of fastening it to me. Besides, everybody about here knows I am no walker, and it would only set them talking."

I occasionally made use of this second machine, but I will only give one instance of its application. Some repairs were needed to the foundation-walls of my barn, and a two-horse wagon, loaded with building-stone, had been brought into my yard and left there. In the evening, when the men had gone away, I took my two machines and fastened them with strong chains, one on each side of the loaded wagon. Then, gradually turning the screws, the wagon was so lifted that its weight became very greatly diminished. We had an old donkey which used to belong to Herbert, and which was now occasionally used with a small cart to bring packages from the station. I went into the barn and put the harness on the little fellow, and, bringing him out to the wagon, I attached him to it. In this position he looked very funny, with a long pole sticking out in front of him and the great wagon behind him. When all was ready, I touched him up, and, to my great delight, he moved off with the two-horse load of stone as easily as if he were drawing his own cart. I led him out into the public road, along which he proceeded without difficulty. He was an opinionated little beast, and sometimes stopped, not liking the peculiar manner in which he was harnessed. But a touch of the switch made him move on, and I soon turned him and brought the wagon back into the yard. This determined the success of my invention in one of its most important uses, and with a satisfied heart I put the donkey into the stable and went into the house.

Our trip to Europe was made a few months after this, and was mainly on account of our son Herbert. He, poor fellow, was in great trouble, and so, therefore, were we. He had become engaged, with our full consent, to a young lady of our town, the daughter of a gentleman whom we esteemed very highly. Herbert was young to be engaged to be married, but as we felt that he would not find another girl to make him so good a wife, we were entirely satisfied, especially as it was agreed on all hands that the marriage was not to take place for some time. It seemed to us that in marrying Janet Gilbert, Herbert would secure for himself, in the very beginning of his career, the most important element of a happy life. But suddenly, without any reason that seemed to us justifiable, Mr. Gilbert, the only surviving parent of Janet, broke off the match, and he and his daughter soon after left the town for a trip to the West.

This blow nearly broke poor Herbert's heart. He gave up his professional studies and came home to us, and for a time we thought he would be seriously ill. Then we took him to Europe, and after a Continental tour of a month or two we left him, at his own request, in Göttingen, where he thought it would do him good to go to work again. Then we went down to the little town in Italy where my story first finds us. My wife had suffered much in mind and body on her son's account, and for this reason I was anxious that she should take outdoor exercise, and enjoy as much as possible the bracing air of the country. I had brought with me both my little machines. One was still in my knapsack, and the other I had fastened to the inside of an enormous family trunk. As one is obliged to pay for nearly every pound of his baggage on the Continent, this saved me a great deal of money. Everything heavy was packed into this great trunk —books, papers, the bronze, iron, and marble relics we had picked up, and all the articles that usually weigh down a tourist's baggage. I screwed up the negative gravity apparatus until the trunk could be handled with great ease by an ordinary porter. I could have made it weigh nothing at all, but this, of course, I did not wish to do. The lightness of my baggage, however, had occasioned some comment, and I had overheard remarks which were not altogether complimentary about people travelling around with empty trunks. But this only amused me.

Desirous that my wife should have the advantage of negative gravity while taking our walks, I had removed the machine from the trunk and fastened it inside of the basket, which she could carry under her arm. This assisted her wonderfully. When one arm was tired she put the basket under the other, and thus, with one hand on my arm, she could easily keep up with the free and buoyant steps my knapsack enabled me to take. She did not object to long tramps here, because nobody knew that she was not a walker, and she always carried some wine or other refreshment in the basket, not only because it was pleasant to have it with us, but because it seemed ridiculous to go about carrying an empty basket.

There were English-speaking people stopping at the hotel where we were, but they seemed more fond of driving than walking, and none of them offered to accompany us on our rambles, for which we were very glad. There was one man, however, who was a great walker. He was an Englishman, a member of an Alpine club, and generally went about dressed in a knickerbocker suit, with gray woollen stockings covering an enormous pair of calves. One evening this gentleman was talking to me and some others about the ascent of the Matterhorn, and I took occasion to deliver in pretty strong language my opinion upon such exploits. I declared them to be useless, foolhardy, and, if the climber had any one who loved him, wicked.

"Even if the weather should permit a view," I said, "what is that compared to the terrible risk to life? Under certain circumstances," I added (thinking of a kind of waistcoat I had some idea of making, which, set about with little negative-gravity machines, all connected with a conveniently handled screw, would enable the wearer at times to dispense with his weight altogether), "such ascents might be divested of danger, and be quite admissible. But ordinarily they should be frowned upon by the intelligent public."

The Alpine club man looked at me, especially regarding my somewhat slight figure and thinnish legs.

"It's all very well for you to talk that way," he said, "because it is easy to see that you are not up to that sort of thing."

"In conversations of this kind," I replied, "I never make personal allusions. But since you have chosen to do so, I feel inclined to invite you to walk with me to-morrow to the top of the mountain to the north of this town."

"I'll do it," he said, "at any time you choose to name." And, as I left the room soon afterwards, I heard him laugh.

The next afternoon, about two o'clock, the Alpine club man and I set out for the mountain.

"What have you got in your knapsack?" he said.

"A hammer to use if I come across geological specimens, a field-glass, a flask of wine, and some other things."

"I wouldn't carry any weight, if I were you," he said.

"Oh, I don't mind it," I answered, and off we started.

The mountain to which we were bound was about two miles from the town. Its nearest side was steep, and in places almost precipitous, but it sloped away more gradually toward the north, and up that side a road led by devious windings to a village near the summit. It was not a very high mountain, but it would do for an afternoon's climb.

"I suppose you want to go up by the road," said my companion.

"Oh, no," I answered, "we won't go so far around as that. There is a path up this side, along which I have seen men driving their goats. I prefer to take that."

"All right, if you say so," he answered, with a smile. "But you'll find it pretty tough."

After a time he remarked:

"I wouldn't walk so fast, if I were you."

"Oh, I like to step along briskly," I said. And briskly on we went.

My wife had screwed up the machine in the knapsack more than usual, and walking seemed scarcely any effort at all. I carried a long alpenstock, and when we reached the mountain and began the ascent, I found that with the help of this and my knapsack I could go uphill at a wonderful rate. My companion had taken the lead, so as to show me how to climb. Making a detour over some rocks, I quickly passed him and went ahead. After that it was impossible for him to keep up with me. I ran up steep places, I cut off the windings of the path by lightly clambering over rocks, and even when I followed the beaten track my step was as rapid as if I had been walking on level ground.

"Look here!" shouted the Alpine club man from below. "You'll kill yourself if you go at that rate! That's no way to climb mountains!"

"It's my way!" I cried, and on I skipped.

Twenty minutes after I arrived at the summit, my companion joined me, puffing, and wiping his red face with his handkerchief.

"Confound it!" he cried, "I never came up a mountain so fast in my life."

"You need not have hurried," I said coolly.

"I was afraid something would happen to you," he growled, "and I wanted to stop you. I never saw a person climb in such an utterly absurd way."

"I don't see why you should call it absurd," I said, smiling with an air of superiority. "I arrived here in a perfectly comfortable condition, neither heated nor wearied."

He made no answer, but walked off to a little distance, fanning himself with his hat and growling words which I did not catch. After a time I proposed to descend.

"You must be careful as you go down," he said. "It is much more dangerous to go down steep places than to climb up."

"I am always prudent," I answered, and started in advance. I found the descent of the mountain much more pleasant than the ascent. It was positively exhilarating. I jumped from rocks and bluffs eight and ten feet in height, and touched the ground as gently as if I had stepped down but two feet. I ran down steep paths, and, with the aid of my alpenstock, stopped myself in an instant. I was careful to avoid dangerous places, but the runs and jumps I made were such as no man had ever made before upon that mountain-side. Once only I heard my companion's voice. "You'll break your —— neck!" he yelled.

"Never fear!" I called back, and soon left him far above.

When I reached the bottom I would have waited for him, but my activity had warmed me up, and as a cool evening breeze was beginning to blow I thought it better not to stop and take cold. Half an hour after my arrival at the hotel I came down to the court, cool, fresh, and dressed for dinner, and just in time to meet the Alpine man as he entered, hot, dusty, and growling.

"Excuse me for not waiting for you," I said. But without stopping to hear my reason, he muttered something about waiting in a place where no one would care to stay, and passed into the house.

There was no doubt that what I had done gratified my pique and tickled my vanity.

"I think now," I said, when I related the matter to my wife, "that he will scarcely say that I am not up to that sort of thing."

"I am not sure," she answered, "that it was exactly fair. He did not know how you were assisted."

"It was fair enough," I said. "He is enabled to climb well by the inherited vigor of his constitution and by his training. He did not tell me what methods of exercise he used to get those great muscles upon his legs. I am enabled to climb by the exercise of my intellect. My method is my business, and his method is his business. It is all perfectly fair."

Still she persisted:

"He *thought* that you climbed with your legs, and not with your head."

Now, after this long digression, necessary to explain how a middle-aged couple of slight pedestrian ability, and loaded with a heavy knapsack and basket, should have started out on a rough walk and climb, fourteen miles in all, we will return to ourselves, standing on the little bluff and gazing out upon the sunset view. When the sky began to fade a little we turned from it and prepared to go back to the town.

"Where is the basket?" I said.

"I left it right here," answered my wife. "I unscrewed the machine and it lay perfectly flat."

"Did you afterwards take out the bottles?" I asked, seeing them lying on the grass.

"Yes, I believe I did. I had to take out yours in order to get at mine."

"Then," said I, after looking all about the grassy patch on which we stood, "I am afraid you did not entirely unscrew the instrument, and that when the weight of the bottles was removed the basket gently rose into the air."

"It may be so," she said lugubriously. "The basket was behind me as I drank my wine."

"I believe that is just what has happened," I said. "Look up there! I vow that is our basket!"

I pulled out my field-glass and directed it at a little speck high above our heads. It was the basket floating high in the air. I gave the glass to my wife to look, but she did not want to use it.

"What shall I do?" she cried. "I can't walk home without that basket. It's perfectly dreadful!" And she looked as if she was going to cry.

"Do not distress yourself," I said, although I was a good deal disturbed myself. "We shall get home very well. You shall put your hand on my shoulder, while I put my arm around you. Then you can screw up my machine a good deal higher, and it will support us both. In this way I am sure that we shall get on very well."

We carried out this plan, and managed to walk on with moderate comfort. To be sure, with the knapsack pulling me upward, and the weight of my wife pulling me down, the straps hurt me somewhat, which they had not done before. We did not spring lightly over the wall into the road, but, still clinging to each other, we clambered awkwardly over it. The road for the most part declined gently toward the town, and with moderate ease we made our way along it. But we walked much more slowly than we had done before, and it was quite dark when we reached our hotel. If it had not been for the light inside the court it would have been difficult for us to find it.

A travelling-carriage was standing before the entrance and against the light. It was necessary to pass around it, and my wife went first. I attempted to follow her, but, strange to say, there was nothing under my feet. I stepped vigorously, but only wagged my legs in the air. To my horror, I found that I was rising in the air! I soon saw, by the light below me, that I was about fifteen feet from the ground. The carriage drove away, and in the darkness I was not noticed. Of course I knew what had happened. The instrument in my knapsack had been screwed up to such an intensity, in order to support both myself and my wife, that when her weight was removed the force of the negative gravity was sufficient to raise me from the ground. But I was glad to find that when I had risen to the height I have mentioned I did not go up any higher, but hung in the air, about on a level with the second tier of windows of the hotel.

I now began to try to reach the screw in my knapsack, in order to reduce the force of the negative gravity, but, do what I would, I could not get my hand to it. The machine in the knapsack had been placed so as to support me in a well-balanced and comfortable way, and in doing this it had been impossible to set the screw so that I could reach it. But in a temporary arrangement of the kind this had not been considered necessary, as my wife always turned the screw for me until sufficient lifting power had been attained. I had intended, as I have said before, to construct a negative-gravity waistcoat, in which the screw should be in front, and entirely under the wearer's control. But this was a thing of the future.

When I found that I could not turn the screw I began to be much alarmed. Here I was, dangling in the air, without any means of reaching the ground. I could not expect my wife to return to look for me, as she would naturally suppose I had stopped to speak to some one. I thought of loosening myself from the knapsack, but this would not do, for I should fall heavily, and either kill myself or break some of my bones. I did not dare to call for assistance, for if any of the simple-minded inhabitants of the town had discovered me floating in the air they would have taken me for a demon, and would probably have shot at me.

A moderate breeze was blowing, and it wafted me gently down the street. If it had blown me against a tree I would have seized it, and have endeavored, so to speak, to climb down it. But there were no trees. There was a dim street lamp here and there, but reflectors above them threw their light upon the pavement, and none up to me. On many accounts I was glad that the night was so dark, for, much as I desired to get down, I wanted no one to see me in my strange position, which, to any one but myself and wife, would be utterly unaccountable. If I could rise as high as the roofs I might get on one of them, and, tearing off an armful of tiles, so load myself that I would be heavy enough to descend. But I did not rise to the eaves of any of the houses. If there had been a telegraph-pole, or anything of the kind that I could have clung to, I would have taken off the knapsack, and would have endeavored to scramble down as well as I could. But there was nothing I could cling to. Even the water-spouts, if I could have reached the face of the houses, were embedded in the walls.

At an open window, near which I was slowly blown, I saw two little boys going to bed by the light of a dim candle. I greatly feared they would see me and raise an alarm. I actually came so near to the window that I threw out one foot and pushed against the wall with such force that I went nearly across the street. I thought I caught sight of a frightened look on the face of one of the boys. But of this I am not sure, and I heard no cries. I still floated, dangling, down the street. What was to be done? Should I call out? In that case, if I were not shot or stoned, my strange predicament, and the secret of my invention, would be exposed to the world. If I did not do this, I must either let myself drop and be killed or mangled, or hang there and die. When, during the course of the night, the air became more rarefied, I might rise higher and higher, perhaps to an altitude of one or two hundred feet. It would then be impossible for the people to reach me and get me down, even if they were convinced that I was not a demon. I should then expire, and when the birds of the air had eaten all of me that they could devour, I should forever hang above the unlucky town, a dangling skeleton with a knapsack on its back.

Such thoughts were not reassuring, and I determined that if I could find no means of getting down without assistance, I would call out and run all risks. But so long as I could endure the tension of the straps I would hold out and hope for a tree or a pole. Perhaps it might rain, and my wet clothes would then become so heavy that I would descend as low as the top of a lamp-post.

As this thought was passing through my mind I saw a spark of light upon the street, approaching me. I rightly imagined that it came from a tobacco-pipe, and presently I heard a voice. It was that of the Alpine club man. Of all people in the world, I did not want him to discover me, and I hung as motionless as possible. The man was speaking to another person who was walking with him.

"He is crazy beyond a doubt," said the Alpine man. "Nobody but a maniac could have gone up and down that mountain as he did! He hasn't any muscles, and one need only look at him to know that he couldn't do any climbing in a natural way. It is only the excitement of insanity that gives him strength."

The two now stopped almost under me, and the speaker continued:

"Such things are very common with maniacs. At times they acquire an unnatural strength which is perfectly wonderful. I have seen a little fellow struggle and fight so that four strong men could not hold him."

Then the other person spoke.

"I am afraid what you say is too true," he remarked. "Indeed, I have known it for some time."

At these words my breath almost stopped. It was the voice of Mr. Gilbert, my townsman, and the father of Janet. It must have been he who had arrived in the travelling-carriage. He was acquainted with the Alpine club man, and they were talking of me. Proper or improper, I listened with all my ears.

"It is a very sad case," Mr. Gilbert continued. "My daughter was engaged to marry his son, but I broke off the match. I could not have her marry the son of a lunatic, and there could be no doubt of his condition. He has been seen—a man of his age, and the head of a family—to load himself up with a heavy knapsack, which there was no earthly necessity for him to carry, and go skipping along the road for miles, vaulting over fences and jumping over rocks and ditches like a young calf or a colt. I myself saw a most heartrending instance of how a kindly man's nature can be changed by the derangement of his intellect. I was at some distance from his house, but I plainly saw him harness a little donkey, which he owns, to a large two-horse wagon loaded with stone, and beat and lash the poor little beast until it drew the heavy load some distance along the public road. I would have remonstrated with him on this horrible cruelty, but he had the wagon back in his yard before I could reach him."

"Oh, there can be no doubt of his insanity," said the Alpine club man, "and he oughtn't to be allowed to travel about in this way. Some day he will pitch his wife over a precipice just for the fun of seeing her shoot through the air."

"I am sorry he is here," said Mr. Gilbert, "for it would be very painful to meet him. My daughter and I will retire very soon, and go away as early to-morrow morning as possible, so as to avoid seeing him."

And then they walked back to the hotel.

For a few moments I hung, utterly forgetful of my condition, and absorbed in the consideration of these revelations. One idea now filled my mind. Everything must be explained to Mr. Gilbert, even if it should be necessary to have him called to me, and for me to speak to him from the upper air.

Just then I saw something white approaching me along the road. My eyes had become accustomed to the darkness, and I perceived that it was an upturned face. I recognized the hurried gait, the form. It was my wife. As she came near me I called her name, and in the same breath entreated her not to scream. It must have been an effort for her to restrain herself, but she did it.

"You must help me to get down," I said, "without anybody seeing us."

"What shall I do?" she whispered.

"Try to catch hold of this string."

Taking a piece of twine from my pocket, I lowered one end to her. But it was too short—she could not reach it. I then tied my handkerchief to it, but still it was not long enough.

"I can get more string, or handkerchiefs," she whispered hurriedly.

"No," I said. "You could not get them up to me. But, leaning against the hotel wall on this side, in the corner, just inside of the garden gate, are some fishing-poles. I have seen them there every day. You can easily find them in the dark. Go, please, and bring me one of those."

The hotel was not far away, and in a few minutes my wife returned with a fishing-pole. She stood on tiptoe and reached it high in air, but all she could do was to strike my feet and legs with it. My most frantic exertions did not enable me to get my hands low enough to touch it.

"Wait a minute," she said, and the rod was withdrawn.

I knew what she was doing. There was a hook and line attached to the pole, and with womanly dexterity she was fastening the hook to the extreme end of the rod. Soon she reached up and gently struck at my legs. After a few attempts the hook caught in my trousers, a little below my right knee. Then there was a slight pull, a long scratch down my leg, and the hook was stopped by the top of my boot. Then came a steady downward pull, and I felt myself descending. Gently and firmly the rod was drawn down, carefully the lower end was kept free from the ground, and in a few moments my ankle was seized with a vigorous grasp. Then some one seemed to climb up me, my feet touched the ground, an arm was thrown around my neck, the hand of another arm was busy at the back of my knapsack, and I soon stood firmly in the road, entirely divested of negative gravity.

"Oh, that I should have forgotten," sobbed my wife, "and that I should have dropped your arm, and let you go up into the air! At first I thought you had stopped below, and it was only a little while ago that the truth flashed upon me. Then I rushed out and began looking up for you. I knew you had wax matches in your pocket, and hoped that you would keep on striking them, so that you would be seen."

"But I did not wish to be seen," I said, as we hurried to the hotel, "and I can never be sufficiently thankful that it was you who found me and brought me down. Do you know that it is Mr. Gilbert and his daughter who have just arrived? I must see him instantly. I will explain it all to you when I come up-stairs."

I took off my knapsack and gave it to my wife, who carried it to our room, while I went to look for Mr. Gilbert. Fortunately I found him just as he was about to go up to his chamber. He took my offered hand, but looked at me sadly and gravely.

"Mr. Gilbert," I said, "I must speak to you in private. Let us step into this room. There is no one here."

"My friend," said Mr. Gilbert, "it will be much better to avoid discussing this subject. It is very painful to both of us, and no good can come from talking of it."

"You cannot now comprehend what it is I want to say to you," I replied. "Come in here, and in a few minutes you will be very glad that you listened to me."

My manner was so earnest and impressive that Mr. Gilbert was constrained to follow me, and we went into a small room called the smoking-room, but in which people seldom smoked, and closed the door. I immediately began my statement. I told my old friend that I had discovered, by means that I need not explain at present, that he had considered me crazy, and that now the most important object of my life was to set myself right in his eyes. I thereupon gave him the whole history of my invention, and explained the reason of the actions that had appeared to him those of a lunatic. I said nothing about the little incident of that evening. That was a mere accident, and I did not care now to speak of it.

Mr. Gilbert listened to me very attentively.

"Your wife is here?" he asked, when I had finished.

"Yes," I said, "and she will corroborate my story in every item, and no one could ever suspect her of being crazy. I will go and bring her to you."

In a few minutes my wife was in the room, had shaken hands with Mr. Gilbert, and had been told of my suspected madness. She turned pale, but smiled.

"He did act like a crazy man," she said, "but I never supposed that anybody would think him one." And tears came into her eyes.

"Now, my dear," said I, "perhaps you will tell Mr. Gilbert how I did all this."

Then she told him the story I had told.

Mr. Gilbert looked from the one to the other of us with a troubled air.

"Of course I do not doubt either of you, or rather I do not doubt that you believe what you say. All would be right if I could bring myself to credit that such a force as that you speak of can possibly exist."

"That is a matter," said I, "which I can easily prove to you by actual demonstration. If you can wait a short time, until my wife and I have had something to eat,—for I am nearly famished, and I am sure she must be,—I will set your mind at rest upon that point."

"I will wait here," said Mr. Gilbert, "and smoke a cigar. Don't hurry yourselves. I shall be glad to have some time to think about what you have told me."

When we had finished the dinner which had been set aside for us, I went up-stairs and got my knapsack, and we both joined Mr. Gilbert in the smoking-room. I showed him the little machine, and explained, very briefly, the principle of its construction. I did not give any practical demonstration of its action, because there were people walking about the corridor who might at any moment come into the room. But, looking out of the window, I saw that the night was much clearer. The wind had dissipated the clouds, and the stars were shining brightly.

"If you will come up the street with me," said I to Mr. Gilbert, "I will show you how this thing works."

"That is just what I want to see," he answered.

"I will go with you," said my wife, throwing a shawl over her head. And we started up the street.

When we were outside the little town I found the starlight was quite sufficient for my purpose. The white roadway, the low walls, and objects about us could easily be distinguished.

"Now," said I to Mr. Gilbert, "I want to put this knapsack on you, and let you know how it feels, and how it will help you to walk." To this he assented with some eagerness, and I strapped it firmly on him. "I will now turn this screw," said I, "until you shall become lighter and lighter."

"Be very careful not to turn it too much," said my wife, earnestly.

"Oh, you may depend on me for that," said I, turning the screw very gradually.

Mr. Gilbert was a stout man, and I was obliged to give the screw a good many turns.

"There seems to be considerable hoist in it," he said directly. Then I put my arms around him, and found that I could raise him from the ground. "Are you lifting me?" he exclaimed in surprise.

"Yes. I did it with ease," I answered.

"Upon—my—word!" ejaculated Mr. Gilbert.

I then gave the screw a half-turn more, and told him to walk and run. He started off, at first slowly, then he made long strides, then he began to run, and then to skip and to jump. It had been many years since Mr. Gilbert had skipped and jumped. No one was in sight, and he was free to gambol as much as he pleased. "Could you give it another turn?" said he, bounding up to me. "I want to try that wall." I put on a little more negative gravity, and he vaulted over a five-foot wall with great ease. In an instant he had leaped back into the road, and in two bounds was at my side. "I came down as light as a cat," he said. "There was never anything like it." And away he went up the road, taking steps at least eight feet long, leaving my wife and me laughing heartily at the preternatural agility of our stout friend. In a few minutes he was with us again. "Take it off," he said. "If I wear it any longer I shall want one myself, and then I shall be taken for a crazy man, and perhaps clapped into an asylum."

"Now," said I, as I turned back the screw before unstrapping the knapsack, "do you understand how I took long walks, and leaped and jumped, how I ran uphill and downhill, and how the little donkey drew the loaded wagon?"

"I understand it all," cried he. "I take back all I ever said or thought about you, my friend."

"And Herbert may marry Janet?" cried my wife.

"*May* marry her!" cried Mr. Gilbert. "Indeed he *shall* marry her, if I have anything to say about it! My poor girl has been drooping ever since I told her it could not be."

My wife rushed at him, but whether she embraced him or only shook his hands I cannot say, for I had the knapsack in one hand, and was rubbing my eyes with the other.

"But, my dear fellow," said Mr. Gilbert, presently, "if you still consider it to your interest to keep your invention a secret, I wish you had never made it. No one having a machine like that can help using it, and it is often quite as bad to be considered a maniac as to be one."

"My friend," I cried, with some excitement, "I have made up my mind on this subject. The little machine in this knapsack, which is the only one I now possess, has been a great pleasure to me. But I now know it has also been of the greatest injury indirectly to me and mine, not to mention some direct inconvenience and danger, which I will speak of another time. The secret lies with us three, and we will keep it. But the invention itself is too full of temptation and danger for any of us."

As I said this I held the knapsack with one hand while I quickly turned the screw with the other. In a few moments it was high above my head, while I with difficulty held it down by the straps. "Look!" I cried. And then I released my hold, and the knapsack shot into the air and disappeared into the upper gloom.

I was about to make a remark, but had no chance, for my wife threw herself upon my bosom, sobbing with joy.

"Oh, I am so glad—so glad!" she said. "And you will never make another?"

"Never another!" I answered.

"And now let us hurry in and see Janet," said my wife.

"You don't know how heavy and clumsy I feel," said Mr. Gilbert, striving to keep up with us as we walked back. "If I had worn that thing much longer, I should never have been willing to take it off!"

Janet had retired, but my wife went up to her room.

"I think she has felt it as much as our boy," she said, when she rejoined me. "But I tell you, my dear, I left a very happy girl in that little bedchamber over the garden."

And there were three very happy elderly people talking together until quite late that evening. "I shall write to Herbert to-night," I said, when we separated, "and tell him to meet us all in Geneva. It will do the young man no harm if we interrupt his studies just now."

"You must let me add a postscript to the letter," said Mr. Gilbert, "and I am sure it will require no knapsack with a screw in the back to bring him quickly to us."

And it did not.

There is a wonderful pleasure in tripping over the earth like a winged Mercury, and in feeling one's self relieved of much of that attraction of gravitation which drags us down to earth, and gradually makes the movement of our bodies but weariness and labor. But this pleasure is not to be compared, I think, to that given by the buoyancy and lightness of two young and loving hearts, reunited after a separation which they had supposed would last forever.

What became of the basket and the knapsack, whether they ever met in upper air or not, I do not know. If they but float away and stay away from ken of mortal man, I shall be satisfied.

And whether or not the world will ever know more of the power of negative gravity depends entirely upon the disposition of my son Herbert, when—after a good many years, I hope—he shall open the packet my lawyers have in keeping.

[NOTE. It would be quite useless for any one to interview my wife on this subject, for she has entirely forgotten how my machine was made. As for Mr. Gilbert, he never knew.]

AMOS KILBRIGHT:
HIS ADSCITITIOUS EXPERIENCES

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AMOS KILBRIGHT: HIS ADSCITITIOUS EXPERIENCES

[This story is told by Mr. Richard Colesworthy, an attorney-at-law in a large town in one of our Eastern States. The fact that Mr. Colesworthy is a practical man, and but little given, outside of his profession, to speculative theorizing, adds a weight to his statements which they might not otherwise possess.]

IN the practice of my profession I am in the habit of meeting with all sorts and conditions of men, women, and even children. But I do not know that I ever encountered any one who excited in me a greater interest than the man about whom I am going to tell you.

I was busily engaged one morning in my office, which is on the ground floor of my dwelling and opens upon the street, when, after a preliminary knock, a young man entered and asked leave to speak with me. He was tall and well made, plainly but decently dressed, and with a fresh, healthy color on his smoothly shaven face. There was something in his air, a sort of respectful awkwardness, which was not without a suggestion of good breeding, and in his countenance there was an annoyed or troubled expression which did not sit well upon it. I asked him to take a chair, and as he did so the thought came to me that I should like to be of service to him. Of course I desire to aid and benefit all my clients, but there are some persons whose appearance excites in one an instinctive sympathy, and toward whom there arise at first sight sentiments of kindliness. The man had said almost nothing. It was simply his manner which had impressed me. I mention these points because generally I do not take an interest in persons until I know a good deal about them.

"What can I do for you?" I asked.

The man did not immediately answer, but began searching for something in one of the pockets of his coat. The little awkwardness which I had first noticed now became more apparent. He appeared to be looking for his pockets rather than for what might be in one of them. He was conscious of his ungainliness, and reddened a little as he fumbled on the inside and outside of his coat.

"I pray you pardon me," he said, "but I will bring before you instantly the matter of my business."

So saying, he got his hand into a breast-pocket and drew out a little packet. There was a certain intonation of his voice which at first made me think that he was not an American, but in that intonation there was really nothing foreign. He was certainly a stranger,—he might be from the backwoods,—and both his manner and speech appeared odd to me. But soon I had no doubt about his being my countryman. In fact, there was something in his general appearance which seemed to me to be distinctively American.

"I came to you, sir," he said, "to ask if you would have the goodness to purchase one or more of these tickets." Then he held out to me a card entitling one person to admission to a séance to be given by a party of spiritualists in one of the public buildings of the town.

A feeling of anger arose within me. I was chagrined to think that I had begun to interest myself in a person who merely came to interrupt me in my business by trying to sell me tickets to a spiritualistic exhibition. My instant impulse was to turn from the man and let him see that I was offended by his intrusion, but my reason told me that he had done nothing that called for resentment. If I had expected something more important from him, that was my affair. He had not pretended to have any other business than that which brought him.

Besides, he offered me something which in fact I wanted. I am a member of a society for psychical research, which, about a year before, had been organized in our town. It is composed almost exclusively of persons who are desirous of honestly investigating the facts, as well as theories, connected with the spiritual phenomena, not only of our own day, but of all ages. We had heard of the spiritualistic exhibitions which were to be given in our town, and I, with a number of my fellow-members, had determined to attend them. If there was anything real or tangible in the performances of these people, we wanted to know it. Considering all this, it would be foolish for me to be angry with a man who had brought me the very tickets I intended to buy, and, instead of turning away from him, I took out my pocket-book.

"I will take one ticket for each of the three séances," I said, and I placed the money on the table.

I would have been glad to buy two sets of tickets, one for my wife, but I knew this would be useless. She did not belong to our society, and took no interest in its investigations.

"Those things are all tricks and nonsense," she had said. "I don't want to know anything about them. And if they were true, I most certainly would not want to know anything about them."

So I contented myself with the tickets for my own use, and as the man slowly selected them from his little package, I asked him if he had sold many of them.

"These you now buy are the first of which I have made disposal," he answered. "For two days I have endeavored to sell them, but to no purpose. There are many people to whom I cannot bring myself to speak upon the matter, and those I have asked care not for these things. I would not have come to you, but having twice passed your open window, I liked your face and took courage."

I smiled. So this man had been studying me before I began to study him! This discovery revived in me the desire that he had come on some more interesting business than that of selling tickets, a thing he did so badly as to make me wonder why he had undertaken it.

"I imagine," said I, "that this sort of business is out of your line."

He looked at me a moment, and then with earnestness exclaimed: "Entirely! utterly! absolutely! I am altogether unfitted for this calling, and it is an injustice to those who send me out for me to longer continue in it. Some other person might sell their tickets; I cannot. And yet," he said, with a sigh, "what is there that I may do?"

The idea that this strong, well-grown man should have any difficulty in finding something to do surprised me. If he chose to go out and labor with his hands,—and surely no man who was willing to wander about selling tickets should object to that,—there would be no difficulty in his obtaining a livelihood in our town.

"If you want regular employment," I said, "I think you can easily find it."

"I want it," he answered, his face clouded by a troubled expression, "but I cannot take it."

"Cannot take it!" I exclaimed.

"No," he said. "I am not my own master. I am as much a slave as any negro hereabouts!"

I was rather surprised at this meaningless allusion, but contented myself with asking him what he meant by not being his own master.

He looked on the floor, and then he looked at me with a steady, earnest gaze. "I should like well to tell you my story," he said. "I have been ordered not to tell it, but I have resolved that when I should meet a man to whom I should be moved to speak I would speak."

Now I felt a very natural emotion of pride. My perception of objects of interest was a quick and a correct one. "Speak on," I said; "I shall be very glad to hear what you have to say."

He looked toward the open door. I arose and closed it. When I had resumed my seat he drew his chair closer to me, leaned toward me, and said:

"In the first place, you should know that I am a materialized spirit."

I sat up, hard pressed against the back of my chair.

"Nay, start not," he said. "I am now as truly flesh and blood as you are, but a short three weeks ago I was a spirit in the realms of endless space. I know," he continued, "that my history is a sore thing to inflict upon any man, and there are few to whom I would have broached it, but I will make it brief. Three weeks ago these spiritualists held privately in this town what they call a séance, and at that time I was impelled, by a power I understood not, to appear among them. After I had come it was supposed that a mistake had been made, and that I was not the spirit wanted. In the temporary confusion occasioned by this supposition, and while the attention of the exhibitors was otherwise occupied, I was left exposed to the influence of the materializing agencies for a much longer time than had been intended—so long, indeed, that instead of remaining in the misty, indistinct form in which spirits are presented by these men to their patrons, I became as thoroughly embodied, as full of physical life and energy, and as complete a mortal man as I was when I disappeared from this earth, one hundred and two years ago."

"One hundred and two years!" I mechanically ejaculated. There was upon me the impulse to get up and go where I could breathe the outer air, to find my wife and talk to her about marketing or some household affair, to get away from this being—human or whatever he was; but this was impossible. That interest which dawned upon me when I first perceived my visitor now held me as if it had been a spell.

"Yes," he said, "I deceased in seventeen hundred and eighty-five, being then in my thirtieth year. I was a citizen of Bixbury, on the Massachusetts coast, but I am not unconnected with this place. Old Mr. Scott, of your town, is my grandson."

I am obliged to chronicle the fact that my present part in this conversation consisted entirely of ejaculations. "Old Mr. Scott your grandson!" I said.

"Yes," he replied. "My daughter, who was but two years old when I left her, married Lemuel Scott of Bixbury, who moved to this town soon after old Mr. Scott was born. It was, indeed, on account of this good old man that I became materialized. He was present at the private séance of which I have spoken, and being asked if he would like to see a person from the other world, he replied that he should be pleased to behold his grandfather. When the necessary influences were set to work I appeared. The spiritualists, who, without much thought, had conceived the idea that the grandfather of old Mr. Scott ought, in the ordinary nature of things, to be a very venerable personage, were disappointed when they saw me, and concluded I was one who, by some mistake, had been wrongfully summoned. They therefore set me aside, as it were, and occupied themselves with other matters. Old Mr. Scott went away unsatisfied, and strengthened in his disbelief in the powers of the spiritualists, while I, as I have before said, was left unnoticed under the power of the materializing force, until I was made corporeal, as I am now.

"When the spiritualists discovered what had happened they were much disturbed, and set about to dematerialize me; for it is not their purpose or desire to cause departed spirits to again become inhabitants of this world. But all their efforts were of no avail. I remained as much a man as any one of themselves. They found me in full health and vigor, for I had never had a day's sickness in my life, having come to my death by drowning while foolishly swimming too far from land in a strong ebb-tide, and my body, being carried out to sea, was never recovered. Being thus put to their wit's end, they determined to keep the matter privy, and to make the best of it, and the first necessity was to provide me with clothing, for on my second entrance into this world I was as totally without apparel as when I first came into it. They gave me these garments of the ordinary fashion of the day, but to which I find myself much unaccustomed, and enjoined upon me to keep silent regarding what had happened, fearing, as I was made aware by some unguarded words, that their efforts to dematerialize me might bring them into trouble."

My professional instincts now came to the front. "That would be murder," I said, "and nothing less."

"So I myself told them," he continued, "for I had come to the determination that I would choose to finish out the life I had broken off so suddenly. But they paid little heed to my words and continued their experiments. But, as I have told you, their efforts were without avail, and they have ceased to make further trial of dematerialization. As, of course, it would be impossible to keep a full-grown man for any considerable length of time secluded and unseen, they judged it wise to permit me to appear as an ordinary human being. Having no other use to which they could put me, they set me to selling tickets for them, and in this business I have fared so badly that I shall restore to them these that are left, and counsel them to seek another agent, I being of detriment to them rather than profit. What may then happen I do not know, for, as I told you, I am not my own master."

"I do not understand you," I said. "If you have been, in this unparalleled manner, restored to your physical existence, surely you are free to do as you please. What these spiritualists have done for you was done by accident. They intended you no benefit, and they have no claim upon you."

"That is true," he said, with a sigh, "but they have a hold upon me. It was but yesterday that they informed me that although, so far, they had failed to restore me to what they call my normal spiritual existence, they had every reason to believe that they soon would be able to do so. A psychic scientist of Germany has discovered a process of dematerialization, and they have sent to him for his formula. This, in a short time, they expect to receive, and they assure me that they will not hesitate to put it in force if I should cause them trouble. Now, sir," he continued, and as he spoke there was a moisture about his eyes, "I am very fond of life. I have been restored to that mortality from which I was suddenly snatched by the cruel sea, and I do not wish to lose it again until I have lived out my natural term of years. My family is one of long life, and I feel that I have a right to fifty more years of existence, and this strong desire for the natural remainder of my life is that which gives these men their power over me. I was never a coward, but I cannot but fear those who may at any moment cause this form, these limbs, my physical state and life, to vanish like a candle-flame blown out."

My sympathies were now strongly aroused in be-half of the subject of these most extraordinary conditions.

"That which you fear must not be allowed," I said. "No man has the right to take away the life of another, no matter what plan or method he may use. I will see the spiritualists, and make it plain to them that what they threaten they cannot be allowed to do."

The man arose. "Sir," he said, "I feel that I have truly found a friend. Whatever may happen to me, I shall never forget your kindness to a very stranger." He held out his hand, and I stood up by him and took it. It was as much a flesh-and-blood hand as my own.

"What is your name?" I asked. "You have not yet told me that."

"I am Amos Kilbright of Bixbury," he answered.

"You have not revisited your native place?" I said.

"No," he replied. "I much desire to do so, but I have no money for a journey, even on foot, and I doubt me much if those men would suffer me to go to Bixbury."

"And have you spoken to your grandson, old Mr. Scott?" I said. "It is but right that you should make yourself known to him."

"So have I thought," he answered, "and I have felt an earnest drawing toward my daughter's child. I have seen him thrice, but have not had the heart to speak to him and declare myself the progenitor of that mother whose memory I know he cherishes."

"You shall make yourself known to him," I said. "I will prepare the way."

He shook me again by the hand, and took his leave without a word. He was deeply affected.

I reseated myself by my table, one thought after another rushing through my mind. Had ever man heard a story such as this? What were all the experiences of the members of the Society for Psychical Research, their stories of apparitions, their instances of occult influences, their best-authenticated incidents of supernaturalism, compared to this experience of mine! Should I hasten and tell it all to my wife? I hesitated. If what I had heard should not be true—and this my first doubt or suspicion impressed upon me how impossible to me had been doubt or suspicion during the presence of my visitor—it would be wrong to uselessly excite her mind. On the other hand, if I had heard nothing but the truth, what would happen should she sympathize as deeply with Amos Kilbright as I did, and then should that worthy man suddenly become dematerialized, perhaps before her very eyes? No, I would not tell her—at least, not yet. But I must see the spiritualists. And that afternoon I went to them.

The leader and principal worker of the men who were about to give a series of spiritual manifestations in our town was Mr. Corbridge, a man of middle age with a large head and earnest visage. When I spoke to him of Amos Kilbright he was very much annoyed.

"So he has been talking to you," he said, "and after all the warnings I gave him! Well, he does that sort of thing at his own risk!"

"We all do things at our own risk," I said, "and he has as much right to choose his line of conduct as anybody else."

"No, he hasn't," said Mr. Corbridge. "He belongs to us, and it is for us to choose his line of conduct for him."

"That is nonsense," said I. "You have no more right over him than I have."

"Now, then," said Mr. Corbridge, his eyes beginning to sparkle, "I may as well talk plainly to you. My associates and myself have considered this matter very carefully. At first, we thought that if this fellow should tell his story we would simply pooh-pooh the whole of it, and let people think he was a little touched in his mind, which would be so natural a conclusion that everybody might be expected to come to it. But as we have determined to dematerialize him, his disappearance would bring suspicion upon us, and we might get into trouble if he should be considered a mere commonplace person. So we decided to speak out plainly, say what we had done and what we were going to do, and thus put ourselves at the head of the spirit operators of the world. But we are not yet ready to do anything or to make our announcements, and if he had held his tongue we might have given him a pretty long string."

"And do you mean," I said, "that you and your associates positively intend to dematerialize Mr. Kilbright?"

"Certainly we do," he answered.

"Then I declare such an act would be inhuman—a horrible crime."

"No," said Mr. Corbridge, "it would be neither. In the first place, he isn't human. It is by accident that he is what he is. But it was our affair entirely, and it was a most wonderfully fortunate thing for us that it happened. At first it frightened us, but we have become used to it now, and we see the great opportunities that this entirely unparalleled case will give us. As he is, he is of no earthly good to anybody. You can't take a man out of the last century and expect him to get on in any sort of business at the present day. He is too old-fashioned. He doesn't know how we do things in the year eighteen hundred and eighty-seven. We put this subject to work selling tickets just to keep him occupied. But he can't even do that. But as a spirit who can be materialized or dematerialized whenever we please, he will be of the greatest value to us. When a spirit has been brought out as strongly as he has been, it will be the easiest thing in the world to do it again. Every time you bring one out, the less trouble it is to make it appear the next time you want it. And in this case the conditions are so favorable that it will be absolute business suicide in us if we allow ourselves to lose the chance of working it. So you see, sir, that we have marked out our course, and I assure you that we intend to stick to it."

"And I assure you," said I, rising to go, "that I shall make it my business to interfere with your wicked machinations."

Mr. Corbridge laughed. "You'll find," he said, "that we have turned this thing over pretty carefully, and we are ready for whatever the courts may do. If we are charged with making away with anybody, we can make him appear, alive and well, before judge and jury. Then what will there be to say against us? Besides, we are quite sure that no laws can be found against bringing beings from the other world, or sending them back into it, provided it can be proved by the subject's admission, or in any other manner, that he really died once in a natural way. You cannot be tried for causing a man's death a second time."

I was not prepared to make any answer on this point, but I went away with a firm resolution to protect Amos Kilbright in the full enjoyment of his reassumed physical existence, if the power of law, or any other power, could do it.

The next morning Mr. Corbridge called on me at my office. "I shall be very sorry," he said, "if any of my remarks of yesterday should cause unpleasant feelings between us. We are desirous of being on good terms with everybody, especially with members of the Society for Psychical Research. You ought to work with us."

"We do not work with you," I replied, "nor ever shall. Our object is to search earnestly and honestly into the subject of spiritual manifestation, and not to make money out of unfortunate subjects of experiment."

"You misunderstand us," said he, "but I am not going to argue the question. I wish to be on good terms with you and to act fairly and plainly all around. We find that we cannot make use of the dematerialization process as soon as we expected, for the German scientist who controls it has declined to send us his formula, but has consented to come over and work it on this subject himself. His engagements will not allow him to visit this country immediately, but he is very enthusiastic about it, and he is bound to come before long. Now, as you seem to be interested in this ex-Kilbright, we will make you an offer. We will give him into your charge until we want him.

He is of no use to us, as he can't tell us anything about spiritual matters, his present memory beginning just where it broke off when he sank in the ocean in seventeen hundred and eighty-five; but he might be very useful to a man who was inclined to study up old-time manners and customs. So, if it suits you, we will make him over to you, agreeing to give you three days' notice before we take any measures to dematerialize him. We are not afraid of your getting away with him, for our power over him will be all the same, no matter where he is."

"I will have no man made over to me," said I, "and Mr. Kilbright, being his own master, can do with himself what he pleases. But, as I said before, I shall protect him, and do everything in my power to thwart your schemes against him. And you must remember he will have other friends besides me. He has relatives in this town."

"None but old Mr. Scott, at least so far as I know," said Corbridge, "and he need not expect any help from him, for that ancient personage is a most arrant disbeliever in spiritualism."

And with this remark he took his leave.

That very afternoon came to me Amos Kilbright, his face shining with pleasure. He greeted me warmly, and thanked me for having so kindly offered to give him employment by which he might live and feel under obligations to no man.

I had promised nothing of the kind, and my mind was filled with abhorrence of such men as Corbridge, who would not only send a person into the other world simply to gratify a scientific curiosity or for purposes of profit, but would rehabilitate a departed spirit with all his lost needs and appetites, and then foist him upon a comparative stranger for care and sustenance. Such conduct was not only mean, but criminal in its nature, and if there was no law against it, one ought to be made.

Kilbright then proceeded to tell me how happy he had been when Corbridge informed him that his dematerialization had been indefinitely postponed, and that I had consented to take him into my service. "It is now plain to me," he said, "that they have no power to do this thing and cannot obtain it from others. This discardment of me proves that they have abandoned their hopes."

It was evident that Corbridge had said nothing of the expected coming of the German scientist, and I would not be cruel enough to speak of it myself. Besides, I intended to have said scientist arrested and put under bonds as soon as he set foot on our shores.

"I do not feel," continued Kilbright, "that I am beginning a new life, but that I am taking up my old one at the point where I left it off."

"You cannot do that," I said. "Things have changed very much, and you will have to adapt yourself to those changes. In many ways you must begin again."

"I know that," he said, "and with respect to much that I see about me I am but a child. But as I am truly a man, I shall begin to do a man's work, and what I know not of the things that are about me, that will I learn as quickly as may be. It is my purpose, sir, to labor with you in any manner which you may deem fit, and in which I may be found serviceable, until I have gained sufficient money to travel to Bixbury, and there endeavor to establish myself in some worthy employment. I had at that place a small estate, but of that I shall take no heed. Without doubt it has gone, rightly, to my heirs, and even if I could deprive them of it, I would not."

"Have you living heirs besides your grandson here?" I asked.

"That I know not," he said. "But if there be such I greatly long to see them."

"And how about old Mr. Scott?" said I. "When shall we go to him and tell him who you are?"

"I greatly desire that that may be done soon," answered Kilbright, "but first I wish to establish myself in some means of livelihood, so that he may not think that I come to him for maintenance."

Of course it was not possible for me to turn this man away and tell him I had nothing for him to do, and therefore I must devise employment for him. I found that he wrote a fair hand, a little stiff and labored, but legible and neat, and as I had a good deal of copying to do, I decided to set him to work upon this. I procured board and lodging for him in a house near by, and a very happy being was Amos Kilbright.

As for me, I felt that I was doing my duty, and a good work. But the responsibility was heavy, and my road was not at all clear before me. My principal source of anxiety was in regard to my wife. Should I tell her the truth about my new copyist, or not? In the course of a night I resolved this question, and determined to tell her everything. When the man was merely Mr. Corbridge's subject the case was different; but to have daily in my office a clerk who had been drowned one hundred and two years before, and not tell Mrs. Colesworthy of it would be an injustice to her.

When I first made known to her the facts of the case, my wife declared that she believed "psychics" had turned my brain. But when I offered to show her the very man who had been materialized, she consented to go down and look at him. I informed Kilbright that my wife knew his story, and we three had a long and very interesting conversation. After an hour's talk, during which my wife asked a great many questions which I should never have thought of, we went up-stairs and left Kilbright to his work.

"His story is a most wonderful one," said Mrs. Colesworthy, "but I don't believe he is a materialized spirit, because the thing is impossible. Still, it will not do to make any mistakes, and we must try all we can to help him in case he was drowned when he says he was, and if that German comes over to end his mortal career a second time. Science is getting to be such a wicked thing that I am sure if he crosses the ocean on purpose to dematerialize Mr. Kilbright, he will try to do it in some way or other, whether the poor man was ever a spirit before or not. One thing, however, is certain: I want to be present when old Mr. Scott is told that that young man is his grandfather."

Mr. Kilbright worked very assiduously, and soon proved himself of considerable use to me. When he had lived in Bixbury he had been a surveyor and a farmer, and now, when he finished his copying duties for the day, or when I had no work of that kind ready for him, it delighted him much to go into my garden and rake and hoe among the flowers and vegetables. I frequently walked with him about the town, showing and explaining to him the great changes that had taken place since the former times in which he had lived. But he was not impressed by these things as I expected him to be.

"It seems to me," he said, "as though I was in a foreign country, and I look upon what lies about me as if everything had always been as I see it. This town is so different from anything I have ever known that I cannot imagine it has changed from a condition which was once familiar to me. At Bixbury, however, I think the case will be otherwise. If there are changes there I shall notice them. In a little place like that, however, I have hopes that the changes will not be great."

He was very conservative, and I could see that in many cases he thought the old ways of doing things much better than the new ones. He was, however, a polite and sensible man, and knew better than to make criticisms to one who had befriended him. But in some cases he could not conceal his disapprobation. He had seen a train of cars before I met him, and I was not able to induce him to approach again a railroad track. Whatever other feelings he may have had at first sight of a train in motion were entirely swallowed up in his abhorrence of this mode of travelling.

"We must not be in a hurry," said my wife, when we talked of these matters. "When he gets more accustomed to these things he will be more surprised at them."

There were some changes, however, which truly did astonish him, and these were the alterations—in his opinion, entirely uncalled for and unwarrantable—which had been made in the spelling of the words of our language since he had gone to school. No steam-engine, no application of electricity, none of the modern inventions which I showed him, caused him the emotions of amazement which were occasioned by the information that in this country "honor" was now spelled without a *u*.

During this time Mr. Kilbright's interest in his grandson seemed to be on the increase. He would frequently walk past the house of that old gentleman merely for the purpose of looking at him as he sat by the open window reading his newspaper or quietly smoking his evening pipe on a bench in his side yard. When he had been with me about ten days he said: "I now feel that I must go and make myself known to my grandson. I am earning my own subsistence, and, however he may look upon me, he need not fear that I am come to be a burden upon him. You will not wonder, sir, that I long to meet with this son of the little baby girl I left behind me."

I did not wonder, and my wife and I agreed to go with him that very evening to old Mr. Scott's house.

The old gentleman received us very cordially in his little parlor.

"You are a stranger in this town, sir," he said to Kilbright. "I did not exactly catch your name. Kilbright?" he said, when it had been repeated to him. "That is one of my family names, but it is long since I have heard of any one bearing it. My mother was a Kilbright, but she had no brothers, and no uncles of the name. My grandfather was the last of our branch of the Kilbrights. His name was Amos, and he was a Bixbury man. From what part of the country do you come, sir?"

"My name is Amos, and I was born in Bixbury."

Old Mr. Scott sat up very straight in his chair. "Young man, that seems to me impossible!" he exclaimed. "How could there be any Kilbrights in Bixbury and I not know of it?" Then, taking a pair of big silver spectacles from his pocket, he put them on and attentively surveyed his visitor, whose countenance during this scrutiny was filled with emotion.

Presently the old gentleman took off his spectacles, and, rising from his chair, went into another room. Quickly returning, he brought with him a small oil-painting in a narrow, old-fashioned frame. He stood it up on a table in a position where a good light from the lamp fell upon it. It was the portrait of a young man with a fresh, healthy face, dressed in an old-style high-collared coat, with a wide cravat coming up under his chin, and a bit of ruffle sticking out from his shirt-bosom. My wife and I gazed at it with awe.

"That," said old Mr. Scott, "is the picture of my grandfather, Amos Kilbright, taken at twenty-five. He was drowned at sea some years afterwards, but exactly how I do not know. My mother did not remember him at all. And I must say," he continued, putting on his spectacles again, "that there is something of a family likeness between you, sir, and that picture. If it wasn't for the continental clothes in the painting there would be a good deal of resemblance—yes, a very great deal."

"It is my portrait," said Mr. Kilbright, his voice trembling as he spoke. "It was painted by Tatlow Munson in the winter of seventeen hundred and eighty, in payment for my surveying a large tract of land north of the town, he having no money to otherwise compensate me. He wrote his name in ink upon the back of the canvas."

Old Mr. Scott took up the picture and turned it around; and there we all saw plainly written upon the time-stained back, "Tatlow Munson, 1780."

Old Mr. Scott laid the picture upon the table, took off his spectacles, and with wide-open eyes gazed first at Mr. Kilbright and then at us.

The sight of the picture had finished the conversion of my wife. "Oh, Mr. Scott," she cried, leaning so far forward in her chair that it seemed as if she were about to go down on her knees before the old man, "this gentleman is your grandfather! Yes, he is, indeed! Oh, don't discard him, for it was you who were the cause of his being here. Don't you remember when you went to the spiritualist meeting, and asked to see the spirit of your grandfather? That spirit came, but you didn't know it. The people who materialized him were surprised when they saw this young man, and they thought he couldn't be your grandfather, and so they didn't say anything about it. They left him right in the middle of whatever they use, and he kept on materializing without their thinking of him until he became just what you see him now. And if he now wore old-fashioned clothes, with a queue, he would be the exact image of that portrait of him which you have, only a little bit older-looking and fuller in the face. But the spiritualists made him cut off his long hair, because they said that wouldn't do in these days, and dressed him in those common clothes just like any other person. Now, dear Mr. Scott, you must see for yourself that he is truly your grandfather!"

Old Mr. Scott made no answer, but still sat with wide-open eyes, gazing from one to the other of us. As I looked at that aged, white-haired man, and thought of his mother, who must have died ever so long ago, being the daughter of the young man who sat opposite to him, it was indeed difficult to believe that these things could be so.

"Mr. Scott," exclaimed my wife, "will you not speak to him? Will you not give him your hand? Will you not acknowledge him as your grandfather, whose picture you have always had near you, and which, when a little boy, I expect your dear mother has often told you to look up to and try to be like? And if you have grown old, and he has not, on account of differences in circumstances, why should that make any difference in your feelings, dear Mr. Scott? Oh, why don't you let him take you to his heart? I don't see how you can help it," she said, with a sob, "and you his little daughter's only child!"

Old Mr. Scott rose to his feet. He pulled down the sleeves of his coat, and gave an adjusting shake to its collar and lapels. Then he turned to my wife and said: "Madam, let us two dance a Virginia reel while your husband and that other one take the poker and tongs and beat out the music on the shovel. We might as well be durned fools one way as another, and all go to the lunatic asylum together."

Now arose Mr. Kilbright to his feet, and stood up very tall. "Grandson Lemuel," he said, "I leave not your house in anger. I see well that too heavy a task has been laid upon your declining years when you are asked to believe that which you have heard to-day. But I wish you to know that I am here to ask nothing of you save that you will give me your hand. I earnestly crave that I may again touch one of my own flesh and blood."

Old Mr. Scott picked up the portrait and looked at it. Then he laid it down and looked at Mr. Kilbright. "Young man," said he, "can you stand there and put your hand upon your heart, and say to me that you are truly Amos Kilbright, my mother's father, who was drowned in the last century, and who was brought back and turned into a live man by those spiritualists, and that you are willing to come here and let yourself be vouched for by Mr. and Mrs. Colesworthy, who belong to some sort of society of that kind and ought to know about such things?"

I was on the point of remarking that the Society for Psychical Research had nothing to do with spiritualism except to investigate it, but my wife saw my intention and checked me.

Mr. Kilbright put his hand upon his heart and bowed. "What you have heard is true," he said. "On my honor, I swear it."

"Then, grandfather," said old Mr. Scott, "here is my hand. It doesn't do to doubt things in these days. I didn't believe in the telephone when they first told me of it, but when I had a talk with Squire Braddon through a wire, and heard his new boots creak as he came up to see who it was wanted him, and he in his own house a good two miles away, I gave in. 'Fetch on your wonders,' says I, 'I am ready.' And I don't suppose I ought to be any more dumfounded at seeing my grandfather than at any of the other wonders. I'm getting too old now to try to find out the whys and the wherefores of the new things that turn up every day. I must just take them as they come. So, if you, Grandfather Kilbright, and our good friends, Mr. and Mrs. Colesworthy, will come into the back room, we'll have a cup of tea, and a talk over old times. To be sure, there will be some gaps which none of us will be able to get over, but we must do the best we can."

After this Mr. Kilbright and his grandson saw a good deal of each other, and the old gentleman always treated his mother's father with the respectful deference which was due to such a relative.

"There are times," he once said to me, "when this grandfather business looks to me about as big and tough as anything that any human being was ever called on to swallow. But then I consider that you and Mrs. Colesworthy have looked into these matters, and I haven't, and that knowin' nothing I ought to say nothing. And if it ever happens to look particularly tough, I just call to mind the telephone and Squire Braddon's creaking boots, and that settles it."

Mr. Kilbright became more and more useful to me, particularly after he had disciplined his mind to the new style of spelling. When he had been with me about a month I insisted that he should take a holiday and visit Bixbury, for I knew that to do this was the great desire of his heart. He could easily reach his native place by rail, but believing that he would rather not go at all than travel on a train, I procured a saddle-horse for him, and when I had given him full directions as to the roads, he set out.

In four days he returned. "How did you find Bixbury?" I asked of him.

"There is no longer such a place," he answered sadly. "I found a town of that name, but it is not the Bixbury in which I was born. That has utterly disappeared."

And after this he never again alluded to his native place.

The high character and many admirable qualities of this man daily increased the affectionate regard and esteem in which he was held by my wife and myself, and, feeling that we could do nothing better for him than to endeavor to make him forget the things of the past, and take a lively and earnest interest in those of the present, we set ourselves to work upon this task. In a great degree our efforts were successful, and we soon perceived that Mr. Kilbright cared more and more for what he saw about him. It was, indeed, natural that he should do this, for he was still a young man, and able to adapt himself to changes in his surroundings.

As I have said, he gradually did so adapt himself, and in the course of the autumn this adaptation took a form which at first amused Mrs. Colesworthy and myself, and afterwards enlisted our hearty sympathy. He became attached to Miss Budworth, the librarian of our town library. He frequently went there for books, and as she was a very intelligent young woman, and very willing to aid him in his selections, it was not strange that he should become interested in her. Very often he would remain at the library until it closed in the evening, when he would walk to her home with her, discoursing upon literary and historical subjects.

My wife and I discussed this situation very thoroughly. Lilian Budworth was a good girl, a sensible one, and a very good-looking one. Her family was highly respectable and her years well proportioned to those of Mr. Kilbright. There seemed to be, therefore, no reason why this intimacy should not be encouraged. But yet we talked over the matter night after night.

"You see," said my wife, "it all seems plain and simple enough. But, on the other hand, it isn't. In the first place, she does not know that he has had a wife, or what old Mr. Scott is to him. He has promised us that he will never say anything to anybody about having lived in the last century without first consulting us. Old Mr. Scott has said over and over again that he doesn't intend to speak of it, and the spiritualists have left town long ago. So, of course, she knows nothing about it. But if things go on she must be told, and what will happen then I would like to know!"

"I am very sorry, indeed, that I cannot tell you," I answered.

"It would be a queer case, anyway," Mrs. Colesworthy continued. "Mr. Kilbright has had a wife, but he never was a widower. Now, having been married, and never having been a widower, it would seem as if he ought not to marry again. But his wife is dead now; there can be no doubt about that."

It was not long before there was no further need for suppositions in regard to this matter, for Mr. Kilbright came to us and announced that he had determined to offer himself in marriage to Miss Budworth.

"I think it is meet and proper," he said, "that I should wed and take that position at the head of a family which a right-minded and respectable man of my age should fill. I reasoned thus when, for the first time, I took upon me this pleasing duty, and these reasons have now the selfsame weight as then. I have been studying the surveying methods of the present day, and I believe I could reëstablish myself in my former profession. Thus could I maintain a wife, if, haply, I get her."

"Get her!" exclaimed Mrs. Colesworthy. "Of course you will get her! She can't help accepting you."

"I should feel the more hope, madam," said Mr. Kilbright, "were it not requisite that she be informed of all that has happened to me. And all this must she know before I require her to make answer to me."

"I must admit," I said, "that I am afraid you are going to have a tough job."

"I don't believe it!" warmly exclaimed my wife. "Lilian Budworth is a girl of good, solid sense, and when she knows just exactly what has happened, it is my opinion she will not object a bit."

"Madam," said Mr. Kilbright, "you greatly embolden me, and I shall speak to Miss Budworth this very day."

Notwithstanding my wife's confidence in Miss Lilian's good sense, she was as much surprised as I when, the next morning, Mr. Kilbright informed us that he had been accepted. As it was yet an hour before the library would open, she hurried around to Miss Budworth's home to know all about it.

The young lady was found pale but very happy. "When he left me last night," she said, "my mind was in a strange hubbub. He had told me that he loved me, and had asked me to marry him, and my heart would not let me say anything but yes. And yet, after he had gone, his wondrous story came up before me as it had not come when he told it, having just been told something else. I did not sleep all night, thinking of it. I have read and pondered a great deal upon these subjects, but I have never been able to make up my mind whether or not to put faith in the strange spiritual manifestations of which we are told. So I determined, a good while ago, not to consider the matter at all. I could do nothing with it, and it would be better that I should let it alone. To this same determination I came early this morning in the case of Mr. Kilbright. None of us knows what he may once have been, nor what he may become. All we know is what we are. Mr. Kilbright may be mistaken as to what he was, but I know what he is. And to that man I give myself as I am. I am perfectly satisfied with the present."

Mrs. Colesworthy enfolded her in an approbatory embrace, and hurried home to tell me about it. "There, now!" she exclaimed, "didn't I say that Lilian Budworth was a girl of good, sound common sense?"

"That is what you said," I answered, "but I must admit that I was afraid her common sense would interfere with her acceptance of his story. We had outside evidence in regard to it, but she had only his simple statement."

"Which is quite enough when a woman truly loves," said Mrs. Colesworthy.

When old Mr. Scott was informed of what had happened, he put down his newspaper, took off his spectacles, and smiled a strange, wide smile. "I have been reading," he said, "about a little machine, or box, that you can talk into and then cork up and send by mail across the ocean to anybody you know there. And then he can uncork it, and out will come all you have said in your very words and voice, with the sniffles and sneezes that might have got in accidental; so that if one of the Old Testament Egyptians that they've been diggin' up lately had had one of these boxes with him, it might have been uncorked, and people could have heard in his own voice just who he was and what was his personal opinion of Moses and his brother Aaron. Now, when an old man like me has just come to know of a thing of this kind, it isn't for him to have a word to say when he is told that Lilian Budworth is to be his step-grandmother. He must take it in along with the other wonders."

As to Mr. Kilbright and his lady-love, they troubled themselves about no wonders. Life was very real to them, and very delightful, and they were happy. Despite her resolutions to give no consideration whatever to her lover's previous existence, Miss Budworth did consider it a good deal, and talked and thought about it, and at last came to understand and to appreciate the fact as thoroughly as did Mrs. Colesworthy and myself. She learned much more of Mr. Kilbright's former life than his modesty had allowed him to tell us, and some of these things she related with much pride. He had been a soldier during the Revolution, having enlisted, at the age of twenty-three, under General Sullivan, when his forces lay near Newport. He afterwards followed that commander in his Indian campaigns in western New York, and served during the rest of the war. It was when the army was in winter quarters in 1780 that Tatlow Munson painted his portrait in payment of an old debt. Miss Budworth's glowing rendition of Mr. Kilbright's allusions to some of the Revolutionary incidents in which he had had a part made us proud to shake hands with a man who had fought for our liberties and helped to give us the independence we now enjoy.

Mr. Kilbright's business prospects soon began to look promising. As was quite natural, his ideas upon some subjects were a little antiquated. But although many of the changes and improvements he saw about him met with no favor in his eyes, he had sense enough to take advantage of certain modern progressive ideas, especially such as related to his profession of surveying. My introduction of him as a friend from Bixbury helped him much in respect to patronage, and having devoted all his spare time during the autumn and winter to study and the formation of business connections, he secured enough profitable employment for the coming season to justify him in taking to himself a wife, and his marriage with Miss Budworth was appointed for the middle of April.

It was about the end of March when I received a letter from Mr. Corbridge, the spiritualist manager, in which he informed me that Dr. Hildstein, the German scientist of whom he had previously spoken to me, had set sail for America and would probably arrive in about ten days.

"As soon as possible after his arrival," wrote Mr. Corbridge, "we shall resume possession of the subject of whom you have been kind enough to take charge during the time when we had no need of him. He will then be dematerialized in order that we may cause him to manifest himself in our séances whenever it may be desirable, but never, I may say, in the complete and perfect physical condition to which he was unintentionally materialized the first time. I promised you that I would give you at least three days' notice of our intention to resume work on this subject, and I have now been much better than my word. I have written very plainly of our intentions, because we wish you to understand exactly what we are going to do; and should we succeed in our proposed experiment, which we certainly expect to do, we shall, probably, make public our whole action in the affair, for this course would most greatly benefit both ourselves and our cause. It will not be necessary for you to inform the subject of our intention, for our power over him will be as great at one time and at one place as at another; and as his coöperation is not in any way needful, you will see for yourself that it will be pleasanter for him not to concern himself with what we are about to do."

When I had read this letter, I sat for half an hour with it open in my hands. It came upon me like a shower of iced water. I had supposed that the spiritualists had utterly abandoned their endeavors to dematerialize Mr. Kilbright. Therefore the news of the revival of these criminal intentions greatly shocked me. To be sure, the coming scientist might have no such power as he pretended to possess, but this supposition did not comfort me. If the man had not already had success in that sort of thing it was not likely that he would come over here to attempt it now.

When I had sufficiently quieted my mental agitation I wrote instantly to Mr. Corbridge, and in my letter I assumed a very confident tone. I told him that Mr. Kilbright's circumstances had so changed that the intended action of the spiritualists in regard to him was now rendered impossible. He had become an active member of society, had gone into business, and would be married in April. The mere statement of these facts I felt quite certain,—so I wrote,—would cause the spiritualists to instantly relinquish all idea of carrying out their previous intention in regard to this most estimable man. If, however, any inhuman craving for scientific investigation should cause them to persist in their cruel and criminal designs, the utmost power of the law should be invoked against them. "To take away human life," I wrote, "in a case like this is murder, no matter how it is done, and should you take away Mr. Kilbright's life, or even attempt it, you shall be indicted and punished for this cold-blooded and premeditated crime."

Before I mailed this letter, I found it absolutely necessary for my peace of mind that I should make my wife acquainted with the threatened danger, and confer with her as to what it would be well to do. Of course, Mrs. Colesworthy was greatly shocked when I read her Corbridge's letter, but she recovered courage sooner than I had done.

"It's all stuff and nonsense," she said. "The man is just as much alive as you and I are, and I don't believe any human power can turn him into a spirit. They might kill him, but then he would be a dead man and not a spiritual mist or vapor. I don't believe they even intend to try to do anything of the kind. They merely wish you to hand him over to them so they can make him work for them for little or no pay. They think, and with good reason, too, that by this time you have taught him how to get along at the present day, and that he may now be of some use to them."

I showed her the letter I had written, and she highly approved of it. "If I were you," she said, "I would send that letter, and then I would not do another thing. Take my word for it, you will never hear from those people again."

We resolved, of course, that we would say nothing to Mr. Kilbright or Lilian about this matter, for it was unwise to needlessly trouble their minds. But we could not help talking about it a great deal ourselves. In spite of the reassuring arguments which we continually thought of, or spoke of to each other, we were troubled, anxious, and apprehensive.

"If we could only get them safely married," said Mrs. Colesworthy, "I should feel at ease. Certainly those people would not do anything to him then."

"I don't believe they can do anything to him at all," I answered. "But how a marriage is going to protect him I cannot imagine."

"Of course, you can't explain such things," said my wife, "but I do wish they were married and settled."

Not long after this she came to me with a supposition. "Supposing," she said, "that those people find it impossible to dematerialize him, they might do something which would be a great deal worse."

"What could that possibly be?" I asked.

"They might materialize his first wife," said she, "and could anything be more dreadful than that? I suppose that woman lived to a good old age, and to bring her forward now would be a height of cruelty of which I believe those people to be fully capable."

"My dear," I exclaimed, "don't bring up any harrowing possibilities which no one but yourself is likely to think of!"

"I wish I could be sure of that," she said. "I have heard, but I don't know how true it is, that spirits cannot be called up and materialized unless somebody wants them, and I don't suppose there is anybody who wants the first Mrs. Kilbright. But these men might so work on Mr. Kilbright's mind as to make him think that he ought to want her."

I groaned. "Dear me!" I said. "I suppose if they did that they would also bring up old Mr. Scott's mother, and then we should have a united family."

"And a very funny one it would be," said my wife, smiling, notwithstanding her fears, "for now I remember that old Mr. Scott told me that his grandmother died before she was sixty, but that his mother lived to be seventy-five. Now, he is eighty, if he is a day, so there would be a regular gradation of ages in the family, only it would run backward instead of in the usual way. But, thinking it over, I don't believe the spiritualists will permanently bring up any more of that family. If they did, they would have to support them, for they could not ask old Mr. Scott to do it, who hasn't money enough to satisfy his descendants, and ought not to be expected to support his ancestors."

My letter must have had a good deal of effect upon Mr. Corbridge, for in less than a week after it was written he came into my office. He informed me that he and his associates were about to give a series of séances in our town, but that he had come on before the others in order to talk to me. "I am extremely sorry," he said, "to hear of this proposed marriage. We want to do what is right and fair, and we have no desire that any act of ours shall create a widow."

"Then," I exclaimed, "you relinquish your design against Mr. Kilbright?"

"Not at all," said he. "We shall carry out our plan before our subject marries. If you choose to hurry up matters and have the wedding take place before we are ready to proceed with our dematerializing process, we shall be very sorry, but the blame must rest on you. You should have had consideration enough for all parties to prevent any such complication as an engagement to marry. As to what you said in your letter in regard to invoking the law against us, I attach no weight whatever to that threat."

"You will find you have made a great mistake," said I, angrily, "when I have brought the law to bear upon you, which now I shall not delay to do."

"You will merely bring ridicule upon yourself," he said, "if you assert that the man you wish to protect is Amos Kilbright. We can prove by records, still to be seen in Bixbury, that said person died in seventeen hundred and eighty-five. On the other hand, if you choose to assert that he is, or was, anybody else, how are you going to prove it? All that you can say is that the person you refer to came from you know not where, and has gone you know not where. If you declare that at one time he was a materialized spirit, you know very well how such a statement as that would be received in a court of law. It will be much wiser to let it be supposed that the person who has lately been seen about this town has run off to Canada than to make any sort of legal inquiry into the matter. If said person were really a man we could have nothing to do with his disappearance, while if he were a materialized spirit the law would have nothing to do with him."

I arose and paced the floor. There was entirely too much force in this man's arguments, but although I could not immediately answer him, his cool determination to persevere in his iniquitous designs so angered me that I declared that he should be punished if I had to do it myself.

"Then you admit," he said, with a smile, "that the law cannot do it. The situation," he continued, "is very plain to us. Although the law can take no cognizance of our action, the case will be very different with all believers in spiritualism, and those who are interested in us. The news that we have done this thing will spread through the spiritualistic circles of the world."

"Has your German arrived?" I asked abruptly.

"Not yet," answered Corbridge, "but we expect him in a few days. He will come directly to this town, because we wish to give him an opportunity of observing the subject in his present form before beginning the dematerializing process."

"What refinement of cruelty!" I exclaimed.

"Oh, of course, the doctor will not make himself known," said Corbridge. "He will merely wish to take a good look at the subject, and see for himself how perfect his materialization has been. Then he will know just what work is before him."

So saying, Mr. Corbridge went away, leaving me too angry to speak, if, indeed, I could have thought of anything which it would have been worth my while to say.

When Mrs. Colesworthy heard what Corbridge had said, she turned white. "They must be married instantly!" she exclaimed. "I knew that was the only way."

It was all very well to talk of an immediate marriage, but it was not so easy to bring it about. It was yet a week before the day fixed for the wedding, and the happy lovers were busy with their preparations, never dreaming of the danger which hung over them. What reason could we give for hastening the marriage rites? At one time we thought it might be wise to explain to them fully the state of the case, but from this course we were deterred for fear of the terrible effect that the news might have on Lilian. Should she hear of the design of Dr. Hildstein, she would never again have a moment's peace, married or unmarried. Once I advised that the two be dissuaded from marrying, at least for a year. In that time we could see if these people really had any power over Mr. Kilbright.

"That will not do at all," said Mrs. Colesworthy. "It will be very long to postpone their happiness, and besides, if that German gets hold of Mr. Kilbright while he is still unmarried, he will snap him up, or rather blow him out, in no time."

"I thought we had persuaded ourselves," I said sadly, "that no one could have any real power of dematerialization."

"So we had," said she, "but that sort of persuasion does not always last."

The result was that we did nothing but hope for the best. But we could not blame ourselves, for, really, there was nothing else to do. I had given up all idea of endeavoring to put Mr. Corbridge and his associates under legal restriction, because if they had power to do the evil we feared, they could do it in one place as well as another, and no court could determine when, how, or by whom Mr. Kilbright had been dematerialized.

The day before the wedding day the German doctor arrived in our town; and having heard this, I went immediately to the hotel where Mr. Corbridge and his party were staying. The spiritualistic manager was not glad to see me, and frankly said so.

"I had hoped," he remarked, "that you had concluded to keep out of this thing. It is no concern of yours. You can be of no possible good to anybody, and the wisest thing you can do will be to drop it."

I assured him that I had no intention of dropping it, and that I should do everything in my power to protect Mr. Kilbright.

"Then, again," continued Corbridge, "there is really no need of giving yourself all this worry. Dr. Hildstein may succeed, and he may not. We have failed, and so may he. He has seen the subject, and has come to a very philosophical and sensible conclusion in regard to him. He will not believe, merely on our assertion, that the man is a materialized spirit. He will proceed with his experiments, and, if they fail, he will consider that the man is a man, and was never anything else. If they succeed, then he will be quite satisfied that he had a perfect right to dematerialize what we had materialized."

"Then you really believe," I said, "that there is a chance that he may fail?"

"Of course there is," said Corbridge. "I do not know his methods, and there may be nothing in them."

I had no doubt that this change of tone in Corbridge was intended to produce in me a feeling of security, that they might thus rid themselves of me. But, though I saw through his purpose, the man's words encouraged me. Of course there must be a good deal of doubt about the German's powers, and, after all, there might be no cause whatever for our anxieties.

"Now, sir," said Corbridge, as I left, "if I were you I would trouble myself no more about this matter. If Dr. Hildstein fails, you will still have your man to do your copying, or your surveying, or anything you like. If he succeeds, we are all in the same condition we were a year ago. 'That subject did not exist at that time. He does not exist at this time.' That will be all we shall have to say about it."

"You forget," I said severely, "the wife he may leave behind him."

"I have nothing to say about that," said Corbridge, rather sharply. "It is a reprehensible business, and I have nothing to do with it."

I went away without seeing the German doctor, but as I heard he spoke no English, and as I did not know German, an interview with him would have been of no avail.

Neither Mrs. Colesworthy nor myself slept that night, we were so filled with anxious fears. But when the day broke, bright and clear, and I had hurried round to Mr. Kilbright's lodgings, and had found him as full of life and vigor as I had ever seen him, we were greatly comforted, and ate our breakfasts with fair appetites.

"If it had been a dark and lowering day," said my wife, "I don't believe I could have swallowed a mouthful."

The marriage was to take place at noon, and the happy pair were to start by the first afternoon train for the sea-shore, where they were to spend a week. Mr. Kilbright hated locomotives and railroads almost as much as ever, but he had told me some time before that he intended to conquer this prejudice, if such a thing were possible.

"Being one of you, I must do as you do," he had said.

The wedding was to be a very simple one. Miss Budworth was to go from her mother's house to the church, where Mr. Kilbright was to meet her. We insisted that he should dress at our house, where he would find better accommodations than at his lodgings; and we assigned him our best guest-room, where he repaired in very good season to array himself in his wedding suit.

It was not quite eleven o'clock when I went up-stairs to see if I could be of any use to Mr. Kilbright in regard to the conclusion of his toilet. I knocked at the door, but received no answer. Waiting a few moments, I opened it and entered. On the floor, in front of a tall dressing-glass, was a suit of clothes. Not only did I see the black broadcloth suit,—not laid out at length, but all in a compact heap,—but I saw the shoes and stockings, the collar and cravat, everything. Near by lay a whisk broom.

The truth was plain. While giving the last touches to his wedding attire, all that was Amos Kilbright had utterly disappeared!

I stood where I had stopped, just inside the door, trembling, scarcely breathing, so stunned by the terrible sight of those clothes that I could not move, nor scarcely think. If I had seen his dead body there I should have been shocked; but to see nothing! It was awful to such an extent that my mind could not deal with it.

Presently I heard a step, and slightly turning, saw my wife close by me. She had passed the open door, and seeing me standing as if stricken into a statue, had entered.

It did not need that I should speak to her. Pale as a sheet, she stood beside me, her hand tightly grasping my arm, and with her lips pallid with horror, she formed the words: "They have done it!"

In a few moments she pulled me gently back, and said in quick, low tones, as if we had been in presence of the dead: "In less than an hour she will be at the church. We must not stay here."

With this she turned and stepped quickly from the room. I followed, closing the door behind me.

Swiftly moving, and without a word, my wife put on her hat and left the house. Mechanically I followed. I could speak no word of comfort to that poor girl, at this moment the happiest of expectant brides. I knew that I had not the power even to attempt to explain to her the nature of the dreadful calamity that had fallen upon her. But I could not let my wife go alone. She, indeed, must speak to Lilian, but there were other members of the family. I might do something.

To my great surprise, Mrs. Colesworthy did not turn into the street which led to the Budworths' house, but went straight on. I thought at first she was going to the church to countermand the wedding preparations; but before I could put a question to her she had gone around a corner, and was hurrying up the steps of the principal hotel in our town.

"Is Dr. Hildstein in?" she asked of the first person she met.

The man, gazing astonished at her pallid face, replied that he was, and immediately conducted us to a little parlor on the first floor, the door of which stood partly open. Without knocking, Mrs. Colesworthy hastily entered, I closely following. A middle-aged man suddenly arose from a small table at which he was sitting, and, turning quickly toward us, made an abrupt exclamation in German.

As I have said, I do not understand German, but Mrs. Colesworthy knows the language well, and stepping up to the man, she said (she afterwards told me the meaning of the words that passed between them): "Are you Dr. Hildstein?"

"I am," he said, his face agitated by emotion, and his eyes sparkling; "but I can see no one, speak to no one! I go out this moment to observe the result of an important experiment!"

My wife motioned to me to close the door. "You need not go," she said, "I can tell you that your experiment has succeeded. You have dematerialized Mr. Kilbright. In one hour he was to be married to a noble, loving woman, and now all that remains where he stood is a pile of clothes!"

"Do you tell me that?" exclaimed the doctor, wildly seizing his hat.

"Stop!" cried Mrs. Colesworthy, her face glowing with excitement, her eyes flashing, and her right arm extended. "Stir not one step! Do you know what you have done?"

"I have done what I had a right to do!" exclaimed the doctor, almost in a shout. "If he is gone he was nothing but a spirit. Tell me where—"

"I will tell you this!" exclaimed my wife. "He was a great deal more than a spirit. He was a man engaged to be married at twelve o'clock this day. You may think there is no law that will sweep down on you, but I tell you there is, and before the clock strikes twelve you shall know it. Do you imagine you have come upon a people who will endure the presence of an ogre—a wretch who reduces to nothing a fellow human being, and calls it an experiment? When we tell what you have done,—my husband cannot speak German, but he is a leader in this town, and he supports me in all I say,—when we have told what you have done, there will be no need of courts or judges or lawyers for you. Like a wild beast you will be hunted down. You will be trampled under foot, you will be torn to pieces! Fire, the sword, the hangman's noose, clubs, and crowbars will not be enough to satisfy the vengeance of an outraged people upon a cold-blooded wretch who came to this country solely for the purpose of perpetrating a crime more awful than anything that was ever known before! Did you ever hear of lynching? I see by your face you know what that means. You are in the midst of a people who, in ten short minutes, will be shrieking for your blood!"

The man's face changed, and he looked anxiously at me. I did not know what my wife had been saying, but I had seen by her manner that she had been threatening him, and I shook my uplifted fist.

"Now, heed what I say," cried Mrs. Colesworthy. "If you do not wish to perish at the hands of an infuriated mob, to die a thousand deaths before your vile spirit leaves this world, knowing that, besides the torments you feel, and those which are to come, you will be in the power of men who will bring you back in a half-finished form to make sport at their meetings whenever they feel like it—"

Drops of perspiration stood on the doctor's face. "Stop that!" he cried, throwing up his arm. "I cannot stand that! I did not know the subject had such friends!"

"Nothing shall be stopped!" exclaimed my wife, "and everything shall happen unless you immediately sit down at that table, or wherever you do those things, and rematerialize Mr. Kilbright, just as you found him, and into the very clothes that were left lying upon the floor!"

The doctor stepped forward—his face was now pale—and addressed himself very deferentially to my wife, totally ignoring me. "If you will retire," he said, "I will try—I swear to you that I will try."

"There is not a minute to be lost," said Mrs. Colesworthy, "not one second. And if as much as a fingernail is missing, remember what I have told you!"

With this we quickly left the room.

As we went down the steps of the hotel Mrs. Colesworthy looked at her watch. "It is twenty-five minutes to twelve," she said. "We must get home as fast as we can."

We hurried along, sometimes almost running.

When we reached our house, Mrs. Colesworthy motioned to me to go up-stairs—she had no breath left with which to speak. I ran up, and stood for a moment at the closed door of our guest-room. With my hand on the knob, I was unable to open it. I heard a step on the stairs behind me, and I opened the door.

There stood Mr. Kilbright, in his wedding clothes, with the whisk broom in his hand.

He turned at the sound of my entrance.

"Do you know," cried the cheery voice of my wife from just outside the door, "that we have barely fifteen minutes in which to get to the church?"

"Can that be?" cried Mr. Kilbright. "The time has flown without my knowing it. We must truly make haste!"

"Indeed we must," said Mrs. Colesworthy, and as she stepped back from the door, she whispered in my ear: "Not a look, not a tremble, to let him know!"

In less than thirty seconds we were on our way to the church, in the carriage which had been ordered for the purpose.

On the church porch we found old Mr. Scott. He was dressed in his best clothes, and greeted us cordially. "In good time," he said. "I am glad to see that. It promises well." Then, looking around to see that no one was within hearing, he came nearer to us. "If I were you," he continued, "I wouldn't say nothing to folks in general about relationships, for there are people, and very good people, too, whose minds haven't got on far enough to make 'em able to understand telephones and the other new kinds of wonders."

We acknowledged the force of his remarks, and all went into the church.

Three days after the departure of Mr. and Mrs. Kilbright on their wedding tour, my wife received a letter from Dr. Hildstein, written by himself from New York, but addressed in the handwriting of Mr. Corbridge.

"I return," he wrote, "to Germany, perfectly happy in having succeeded in my experiments; but nevermore, esteemed lady, will I dematerialize a subject who has remained long enough in this world to make friends, and I am the only man who can do this thing."

This letter greatly satisfied us. "It shows that he has some heart, after all," said Mrs. Colesworthy, "but as to that man Corbridge, I believe he would have kept poor Mr. Kilbright dancing backward and forward between this world and the other as long as a dollar could be made out of him. But there is only one way in which he can do us any harm now, and that is by materializing the first Mrs. Kilbright. But knowing us as he now does, I don't believe he will ever try that."

"No," said I, "I don't believe he ever will."

Should you ever meet with Mr. Amos Kilbright, you need not hesitate to intrust him with any surveying you may have on hand. Mr. Corbridge cannot dematerialize him, the German scientist will not, and there is no one else in the world who would even think of such a thing. Therefore you need feel no fear that he may suddenly vanish from your sight, leaving nothing behind him but his clothes and the contents of his pockets—unless, indeed, he should again be so foolish as to go to swim in the ocean at a point where there is a strong ebb-tide.

THE KNIFE THAT KILLED PO HANCY

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THE KNIFE THAT KILLED PO HANCY

PO HANCY was the chief of a band of dacoit robbers—those outlaws who for years have ravaged portions of British Burmah, killing, stealing, and burning, and regarding not whether the sufferers were their own people or white-skinned foreigners. Prominent among these midnight assassins and robbers was Po Hancy, but he came to his just reward at last, being trapped and killed by two native spies, and the knife by which his head was severed from his body lay on my library table. It had been sent to me by a missionary friend, to whom it had been brought as a trophy of the superior valor of the loyal and somewhat civilized natives over that of the outlaws of the jungle. It was a rude weapon, with a heavy blade nearly nine inches long, enclosed in a wooden sheath, and with a beautifully polished handle of bone-like wood. On the point of the blade and on its sides were great blotches of rust, caused by the blood of Po Hancy.

This formidable weapon, with its history, was very interesting to me. I could sympathize with the joyful satisfaction with which the little band of missionaries had looked upon the knife as a blessed sleep-giver, an assurance that they need no longer lie awake on account of rumors of the approach of that bloodthirsty and unconvertible heathen and his band.

More than that, it had another interest for me: it made me think of the man who had come to his death by it. The idea struck me that Po Hancy and I were as different from each other as two human beings could possibly be. To arrange our differences in a tabulated statement would be a work of a good deal of time and very little value, but there was one dissimilarity between us that particularly impressed itself upon me: I had heard a good deal of this tiger-like dacoit, crawling through the jungles for ten, fifteen, or twenty miles, leaping down rocks with foothold as silent and certain as that of a cat, and bounding upon his victims with the strength and swiftness of an untiring beast of prey.

How different was I—a languid, soft-fleshed, almost middle-aged lawyer, tired out by sedentary work by night and by day, to whom a walk of half a mile was weariness, and a climb to my office on the fifth floor of a lofty building, a backache. As a young man I had been somewhat athletic, but years of too much work of one kind, and too little of another, had made activity a memory, and wholesome exercise a discomfort. Po Hancy was a specimen of perfect animal life, and of the most imperfect life of the mind and soul. My body resembled his mind and soul. Of my mind and soul I will say nothing, being of a modest disposition.

Po Hancy was gone—utterly departed and annihilated, with the exception of the atoms of dried blood which might yet remain in the blotches of rust upon this ugly knife-blade. Strangely enough, it was possible that something which had helped to make up that fierce dacoit—some portions, minute though they might be, of his very self—might lie here before me, in my library, by my prayer-book and a recent letter from my mother, in a home of high civilization on the other side of the world from the Burmese jungle.

As I sat thinking of these things, I took out my pocket-knife, and began to scratch the spots of rust upon the blade, and succeeded in detaching a little of the fine dust from the iron, oxidized by means of Po Hancy's life-currents. There was so little of it that I had to moisten the end of my knife-blade in order to take it up and carefully look at it. Of course, to the eye it was like any other iron-rust, but to my mind it was far different. If there really were atoms of blood still in it, it was all, or nearly all, that remained above earth of the famous Po Hancy.

Involuntarily I balanced my penknife on my finger, as if to weigh this infinitesimal remnant of savage mortality, when suddenly the knife slipped, and, in endeavoring to catch it, the point ran into the thumb of my left hand, inflicting a slight wound. For a moment I was frightened. Here was an example of the folly of playing with edged tools, especially those that had belonged to savage heathens. This knife of the slayer of the dacoit might have been poisoned, and here I had wounded myself with the point of my own knife, to which adhered the dust I had scraped from it. It was horrible to think that in a few hours I might perish by the same knife that slew that ferocious murderer!

After a time, however, I calmed myself, for I had never heard that the Burmese used poisoned weapons, and when several days had passed without my having felt any evil effects from the wound, which soon healed, I felt perfectly safe. In fact, instead of there being any injurious result from the cut (or the not inconsiderable nervous shock consequent upon it), I found myself in rather better health than usual, and one afternoon I walked across the Common, through the Public Garden, and four or five blocks beyond, to my home, and did not feel the least fatigue. I had not had an experience of this kind for two or three years.

During the next few weeks, many of my friends remarked that my health was certainly improving, and there could be no doubt that they were correct. I began to take walks that were moderately long. I played billiards, that used to tire me so much that I seldom played a whole game. And, what surprised everybody, and myself quite as much, I joined an athletic club. This numbered among its members a dozen or more of my friends, nearly all of whom, at one time or another, had pressed me to join the club, assuring me that it was the best thing I could do if I wished to regain my old strength and activity. But I had always refused. The very idea of gymnastic exercise was disagreeable to me, and I was annoyed at their persistence in advising it.

Now they were astonished at my change of opinion, and some of them were inclined to ridicule me, suggesting some very easy and mild methods of exercise, suitable for a small boy beginner. But they stopped that sort of chaff when I raised a vaulting-bar several inches higher than the last performer had left it, and then went over it without touching, and when, seizing a trapeze bar, I drew up my body and threw myself around it with the ease of a circus man, some of them remembered I used to do that sort of thing, but that I could return to it now, after all these years of desk-work, amazed them.

I kept up my gymnastic exercises nearly every day, and as the club was to give a public exhibition early in the autumn, I felt inclined to take part in it. All my love for athletic sport had returned. But, in spite of my undoubted activity, there were a good many men in the club who were greatly my superiors in athletic feats, and there was no reason to suppose I would achieve any especial distinction in the public games. The conviction of this somewhat dampened my desire to become a contestant on so important an occasion, and I sat down, one evening, to consider the matter. "In the first place," I said to myself, "how did I regain all my old strength and activity? I have not altered my method of living, my diet is the same, I have had no change of air." At this moment my eye fell on the knife that killed Po Hancy, which still lay upon my table. "By George!" I exclaimed, springing to my feet, "could it have been that?"

My face flushed and my whole form glowed as I remembered how I had fancied I had poisoned myself by introducing into my veins the stuff I had scraped from the Burmese knife. And now, could it be? Was it by any means possible that I had accidentally inoculated myself with some of the blood of Po Hancy, and in so doing had introduced into my system some of his savage vigor and agility?

The more I thought of this, the more strongly I became convinced that it was so. I am a scientist in an amateur way, and I take a great interest in experiments such as those performed by Brown-Séquard and Dr. Koch. If certain physical attributes of one class of living beings could be communicated to another by inoculation, or hypodermic injection, why should not another physical attribute be transmitted in the same way? I could see no reason why this should not be so, and, in fact, I believed myself a proof that the thing could be done.

Now, if I possessed some of the high physical qualities of the defunct Po Hancy, why should I not possess them to a greater degree? What he had had in perfection was what I lacked. If I could get what he no longer needed, and what, indeed, I would gladly have deprived him of, whether I had been able to get it or not, why should I not have it? There was really nothing to object to in this proposition, and I determined to make an experiment.

Rubbing some glycerine over the blood-spots upon the dacoit knife, I scraped vigorously until I accumulated a little mass of the gummy substance. Then, baring my left arm, and excoriating a little spot on it, as if I were about to vaccinate myself, I rubbed in the compound. "Now," said I, wrapping a handkerchief around my arm, "we shall see what we shall see."

The next morning, our waitress, who was just entering the breakfast-room, saw what she did see. She saw me come in at another door, look at the table, set ready for the family breakfast, with a large bouquet, a foot and a half high, in the center of the table, run a few steps, and then bound entirely over said table, bouquet and all, and come down upon the other side with an elastic thud, as if I had been made of india-rubber. She screamed, and, although I had not touched anything, stood expecting a crash.

"Merciful me, sir!" she exclaimed, when she found nothing was about to happen, "I never did see anybody so supple."

When my two sisters came down,—with me, they made up the family, for my mother was in Europe,—I had to tell them about this jump, for I did not want the girl to do it.

"I have noticed, Harry," said Amelia, "that you have changed very much of late. You are as springy as a jack-in-the-box, and you used to be so poky and stiff. I think you ought not to do that sort of thing in the house. Suppose you had swept everything off this table, what a lot of damage you would have done! And I have had to have the stair-carpet stretched and replaced because you will persist in going up three steps at a time, and getting it all out of shape."

"I am very glad that Harry is feeling so strong and well," said Jenny, "and I am going to teach him to play tennis."

I laughed internally as I thought of a man with my nimble power playing a baby game like tennis.

The inoculation with the blood of Po Hancy was undoubtedly a success. I could feel strength and vigor bounding through my veins. Without hesitation, I announced myself as a candidate for athletic honors in the approaching games.

I will not here relate the feats I performed on the great field of our club. In contests of hurling, lifting, and all that, I took no part. But in running, jumping, vaulting, bounding, I excelled all competitors and broke several records. Had Po Hancy been in my place, he might have done better, but, without the influence of Po Hancy's wild blood, no one on the grounds could have done as well. This is what I said to myself, as the crowd roared out its applause, and my friends gathered around me to shake my hand.

Not only was my whole habit of life changed, but the changes went on. I was not content to be able to bound like a tiger and run like a deer, but I wanted to do these things. Several times, when coming home from my office in the evening, I was stopped by policemen who wanted to know what I was running away from. I had some difficulty in persuading them that I ran purely from a love of exercise, and they advised against such speed in the public streets. Late at night, I used to have grand runs in the Common, but this did not suit me very well. There were sometimes observers, and the place was too open. I liked better the Public Gardens, which afterwards became my nightly exercise ground.

With a pair of soft tennis-shoes on my feet, it was my delight to steal swiftly around masses of shrubbery, dart up avenues, slip before the eyes of astonished policemen, and vanish into the shade, to bound into the branches of some heavily foliaged tree and watch the guardian of the peace stalking below me, and then, when he had passed, to drop noiselessly down, to track him over the whole of his beat, without his suspecting that my soft-falling footsteps followed his.

I did not pay much attention to my business, as had been my custom, and I indulged in exercise and long walks, even in the daytime, when I should have been at my office. I felt a great desire to hunt—I do not mean to follow the hounds in their courses about the Boston suburbs, but to tramp through the wild woods and kill things with a rifle. As there was little scope for this sort of sport in the coast country of Massachusetts, I wanted to take a trip to the lower part of Florida, for it was too late in the season to go far West. In the forests down there I was sure I could still find wild game, and if a wandering Seminole Indian happened to interfere with me, or a reckless alligator-hunter picked a quarrel with me, I felt that I would be very well able to take care of myself.

My law partners, however, objected very strongly to my leaving town in the midst of our busiest season, and I was obliged to postpone my contemplated trip. One of the members of our firm jocosely remarked to me that, so far as business was concerned, I was a better man when I was not so well. And my sisters, who used to object to walking with me because I was so much given to going slowly and stopping often, now declined to accompany me because I strode so rapidly that it tired them to keep up with me. In fact, in the whole of Boston, I did not know any one who shared my fancies for what might be called super-exercise, and I was obliged to be content with my own company in my morning bounces and my evening spins.

But it must not be supposed that I lost at this time my desire for companionship. In truth, a novel desire of that sort sprang up within me. A distant relative of my mother, who had always been accustomed to spend some weeks with us in the autumn, now came to make her annual visit. This was a lady of thirty, or thereabout, by the name of Susan Mooney. She was the kindest, gentlest, quietest, softest woman in the world. Her disposition was so tender that if one spoke to her of trouble or pain, the tears would almost always come into her eyes.

My sisters were sorry that Susan made her visit this year during the absence of our mother, for, although they liked her and loved her, they did not find her a congenial companion. They were lively girls, fond of society, while she was the quietest of the quiet, and fond of home. Consequently, they were well pleased when they found that I seemed to fancy Susan's company, for that relieved them of the burden. But, after a week or two, their feelings changed, and they told me they thought I was giving entirely too much of my time to Susan. My family had come to look upon me as a bachelor who would never think of marrying, and it would have surprised them to see me paying marked attention to any lady. But when my sisters saw me paying attention, so very marked indeed, to Susan Mooney, they were not only surprised, but offended.

"If you are going to marry anybody," said Amelia, "do take some one who is suitable for you. Mother is very fond of Susan, and we like her, but she would never do for a wife for you. She is no better than a bag of milk."

I looked at them and smiled. It was true that I had taken Susan to the theatre or to concerts, evening after evening, although I had been in the habit of declining to go to such places with my sisters, that I made her take long walks with me, that I spent hours with her when I should have been in my office, and that lately she had been known to flush a little when I came into the room where she was.

"Susan Mooney," I said, "is exactly the kind of girl —or lady—that I like. She is so gentle, so docile, so submissive, that—"

"Submissive!" snapped Jenny. "I should think so. She has not the least bit of will of her own. You would become a perfect tyrant with a wife like that. I believe she would grow to tremble when she heard your footstep."

"I do not say," I answered, "that I am going to marry Susan, nor that I am going to marry anybody, but if I ever do take a wife, I want one who will tremble when she hears my footstep."

They both laughed. "For a mild-mannered man," cried Amelia, "you talk bigger than any one I ever heard. The idea that any one could ever tremble at your footstep is ridiculous."

I made no answer. It was well that they could not analyze the blood that now ran in my veins. To me Susan Mooney was attractive to a degree that no other woman had been. I would not cease my attentions to her, but, perhaps, since my sisters seemed so observant, I would be more wary about them.

I had used to be somewhat of a submissive person myself, but I was such no longer. I did not always state my determination to do things against the opinions and wishes of others, but the determination was never altered. I grew to like to put myself in opposition, especially if the other party did not know how I stood. This I flattered myself might be a good thing for a lawyer, but it was very different from my old methods of thought and action. I also felt occasional desires to put myself in physical opposition to some one. I did not feel quarrelsome, but if I had seen a reasonable opportunity of obtruding my physical superiority on a fellow-being, I should have been glad to avail myself of it. Civilized society does not offer chances of this sort sufficiently often to satisfy Po Hancyish cravings.

One evening, as I was sitting in my library and study on the third floor, I heard a slight noise downstairs, as if from the opening of a door. I knew the rest of the family had all retired, and I naturally thought that a burglar was trying to enter the house. The moment this idea came into my mind, my whole body thrilled with a warm ecstasy. I slipped off my shoes, and stole to the top of the stairs and listened. I heard the noise again! Darting back into my room, I buttoned my dark coat tightly around my neck to conceal my white collar, and then, seizing the knife that killed Po Hancy, I silently glided down the stairway. My eyes must have glistened with the expectant joy of meeting a burglar. What transporting delight it would be to steal upon the rascal and slay him with one blow! It is so seldom that one gets an opportunity to legitimately slay a rascal, or indeed any one. I do not say that I would have decoyed a burglar into the house for the purpose of slaying him, but if one were really here of his own accord, how gladly would I exercise my legal rights!

Down the stairs I went, bending low, with eyes peering into the dark, with ears stretched to catch the slightest sound, and with the knife that killed Po Hancy half raised in my right hand. I went through all the rooms on the first floor. I descended into the cellar, feeling my way about in the darkness, and stopping at intervals to listen. I even penetrated to the back of the coal-bin, and I remember thinking with pride how I stepped so carefully as to scarcely disturb the coals that were piled about me.

Suddenly I heard the same noise that I had noticed before. It was above me, and, with a quick and silent bound, I was at the top of the cellar stairs. Here I found what had made the noise. It was a door at this spot which had been left open. I had noticed that it was not fastened when I came down, but thought nothing of it. A ventilating window was near by, and when a puff of wind came into this window the door was opened a little way, and then slowly swung, back of its own inclination.

When I discovered the facts of the case, I could almost have cried. I felt that I had sustained a cruel disappointment. Chagrined and depressed, I walked slowly into the dining-room, and sat down, debating with myself whether, or not, I would care to put on my hat and take a long night run. While sitting thus, I heard some one coming down the stairs with slow and deliberate footsteps. I knew those footsteps. They were those of Mary Carpenter, our good old housekeeper. Ashamed that she should find me sitting in the dark, I got up and began to look for matches, but before I found them, she entered, carrying a lighted candle.

"Mercy on me, Mr. Harry!" she exclaimed. "What on earth are you doing here in the dark? I just remembered that I did not fasten the top cellar door, and I came down to do it. Are you sick?"

"No," I answered, "I am hungry, and I came down to get some pie. I was just going to strike a light."

"Well, well!" exclaimed the good Mary, "that is just like you, Mr. Harry. When you were a boy, and even a young man, you were always wanting to eat pie at night, and there were some that said that you would have better health if you had not done so much of it. But, for my part, I can't see any harm in eating good, wholesome pie, when a body feels hungry for it. I have not heard you say you wanted some pie for a long while, and it seems like good old times to give you some after everybody else is in bed. Now, it is lucky that I made to-day, with my own hands, the first pumpkin-pies of the season. I'll get one and cut you a piece. Goodness gracious, Mr. Harry! You didn't mean to cut one of my pies with that horrible knife, did you? If you did, I am truly glad I came down in time to stop you. A heathen knife in a Christian pie is something I never heard of yet, and I hope never to. It would poison it."

In a few minutes the good Mary placed before me a noble specimen of her pastry-cooking.

"There," said she, "is a pumpkin-pie fit for a king. Only kings never get them, and I suppose they would call it a pudding in England, if they had it at all. It's a good inch and a half thick, the way you always liked them, and I am sure a piece of it will not hurt you."

She cut a generous segment of the pie, and gave it to me on a plate. She was delighted to see with what pleasure I ate it, and when I asked for another piece, she was surprised, but gave it to me. When I asked for a third piece, she demurred a little, but, in spite of her really earnest protestations, I helped myself to more, and eventually finished the whole pie, which was of a size sufficient for an ordinary family.

"Well, well!" said Mary, as she took away my plate and the empty pie-dish, "this beats anything you ever did when you were a boy. I only hope you won't feel badly in the night, but, if you do, come to my door and knock. It won't take me a minute to mix some peppermint for you, or give you anything else you need."

I did not wonder that the good Mary was astonished at the midnight appetite of a Po Hancy. I began to fear, however, that I had been imprudent in letting this appetite run away with me, and felt very glad that there was some one in the house who knew what to do for victims of unreasonable voracity. However, there was no occasion for her services, for I went to bed and slept the sleep of an infant. In the morning, when I awoke, fresh and clear-headed, with a wholesome appetite for my breakfast, I felt what it was to possess the digestion of a dacoit.

The wonderful physical powers with which I felt myself endowed were sources of the greatest satisfaction to me, but they began to have their drawbacks, and, after a time, they caused me great mental uneasiness. Because I knew myself perfectly able to do certain things which I ought not to do, I wished to do them. For instance, there was a stout man of German-Jewish aspect, who, before my Po Hancy days, had been in the habit of going home from his business about the same time that I did, and frequently took the street-car in which I was riding. This man, if it were possible, always seated himself next to me, thinking, I imagined, that as I was rather a slender man he would have a better chance of crowding me, and getting more than his share of room, in case the car became full. And when this opportunity was afforded him, he always availed himself of it to the utmost. I sometimes remonstrated with him, and sometimes tried to crowd him a little, but neither course was of any service, and it not unfrequently happened that I got up and stood on the platform to avoid this unsavory persecutor.

As I now thought of this man, my blood boiled within me. I did not, at this time, ride in street-cars, for I felt no need of them, but I felt greatly tempted to get into one at the hour I usually left my office, in the hope that the stout man would enter and sit beside me. If this should happen, and he should dare to push or elbow me, I would spring upon him and hurl him out of the door of the car, no matter how rapidly it might be moving. I ground my teeth in savage anticipation of the joy I would take in thus avenging myself for all his former insults. But my common sense and my familiarity with the common law showed me that this would be a very foolish thing to do, certain to bring me into trouble, and even ridicule, which would be worse. My uncivilized instincts were so strong that frequently I was obliged, figuratively, to put my hand upon my own shoulder, to prevent myself from entering a car in which there was a chance of encountering the stout German.

There were other novel and perhaps aboriginal cravings which came upon me at this time. One of these was an abnormal longing to possess desirable objects. For instance, in a jeweller's window, which I frequently passed, there was a handsome brooch which attracted my favorable attention. It was composed of a large stone of the moonstone order, artistically surrounded by brilliants. It struck me that this would be a most appropriate ornament for the gentle Susan. Several times I stood looking at it, and planning how I might get it for her without resort to the usual methods of exchange. A strong tap on the window-pane, a quick snatch, and then a series of dartings and doublings along a route which I had marked out in my mind—around a corner, up an alley, over the fences of two back yards that I had noted, into a small street, where I would change my soft, light-colored felt hat for a dark travelling-cap which I would have in my pocket; then a rush into a crowded thoroughfare, and a leisurely walk home. But this scheme did not altogether please me. I would have better liked, in the dark hours of the morning, to climb a tree which stood before the jeweller's shop, to go out on a limb until it bent down to the level of the transom window over the top of the door, to open this, slip in, pocket the brooch, climb up to the transom, listen, drop outside, and noiselessly glide away.

I had entirely too many fancies of this kind, and, when away from my temptations, my mind was seriously troubled by the thoughts of the dangers to which I was exposed. This robber blood was making a different man of me—a man who ran the risk of ending his life in a prison. I used to ponder for hours upon my alarming condition. Sometimes I thought of myself as another Mr. Hyde. But alas! my case was worse than that. I was not sometimes good and sometimes bad. I was under an evil influence which was steadfast and of increasing power, the effects of which, my reason told me, must be permanent. When a Christian gentleman puts dacoit blood into his veins, there is no way of his getting it out again, except by letting out all of his blood—a remedy I did not fancy. How earnestly I wished Po Hancy had been converted before he had been killed!

But had the robber chief repented and lived a proper life, he would not have been killed, and I would have had no knife with his blood on it, and my present physical perfection would never have come to me. When I looked upon the matter in this light, I asked myself whether I would have been satisfied had it been so, and I could not bring myself to answer yes. After all, it was my vanity that had brought this terrible peril upon me. Had I been contented with the little prick my knife had given me, I might have been no more than the active, healthy gentleman I had always wished to be. But that foolish desire to shine in the athletic games had not only given me an excess of strength, but also the impulses of a jungle sneak.

When troubled thus, my greatest relief was the society of Susan Mooney. The flow of her gentle soul was so unrippled that it seldom failed to soothe me. Feeling the great good she was to me, I now made up my mind to marry her, and it delighted me to think that, in so doing, I would not be troubled by the ordinary antecedents of matrimony. I would simply inform her that she was to be my wife, then all she would have to do was to set herself to the task of getting ready for the ceremony. But I could not always avail myself of the soothings of Susan, and the agitations of my mind became more harassing and frequent.

Early one evening I was sitting alone in my study, torn by a desire to take a long walk in the suburbs, and restrained by a fear that if I did so I should be induced to forget that I was not a prowling dacoit. Suddenly I heard a cry below stairs. It was the voice of my dear Susan, in terror and pain. In ten seconds I had bounded down to the drawing-room, where, between my two sisters, I found the fair Susan almost fainting, with one of her white hands reddened with her blood, and in her lap the knife that killed Po Hancy. The situation was quickly explained. That afternoon Jenny had brought down the knife to show a visitor interested in such things, and now Susan had been playing with it, and had cut her finger!

The wound was not a serious one, and the sufferer was soon cared for and conducted to her room. I took the knife up-stairs, determined to lock it up securely. But, as I was about to replace it in its sheath, I noticed that the blade was discolored in several places with fresh blood—the blood of Susan, still moist.

I sat for some ten minutes, earnestly gazing upon the knife-blade. What a contrast!—the blood of Po Hancy, the blood of Susan Mooney. As I pondered, a thought, seemingly filled with the light of a coming salvation, dawned upon me. I bared my right arm, and with my penknife scratched the skin for a space of over an inch in diameter. On this I rubbed the moist blood of Susan, as much of it as I could get from the great knife-blade, and which exceeded in quantity that which I had obtained from the rust-spots. I trembled when this deed was finished. I did not dare to think what might happen, but I hoped.

The next day my right arm was very sore, and I could not write. I felt assured that no one with dacoit blood in his veins should be allowed to perform an operation of the nature of vaccination. As my disability, the cause of which I did not explain to any one, gave a reason for a little vacation, I went off to the Berkshire Hills. The gay season of Stockbridge and Lenox had not yet come to an end, and the life there interested me very much. It was a pleasant change. For years I had mingled very little in fashionable society. I met a good many friends and acquaintances, all glad to have me with them, and surprised as well as pleased at my willingness to enter into all the festive doings of the region. In fact, I agreed to whatever was proposed to me, except when two of my fellow-members of the athletic club asked me to join them in a long tramp. This I declined, mainly for the reason that they had planned to start very early in the morning before sunrise, and I would not give up the delightful and tranquillizing hours of sleep which immediately precede a late breakfast.

At the close of the day after my return, I rode home from my office in a street-car. At the corner where I had been in the habit of expecting him, the stout German got in. There was an empty place next to me, large enough for an ordinary person, but not large enough for him. He came directly toward me, and endeavored to squeeze himself into the vacancy. As he did so, I moved as far as possible away from him, in order to give him the room he desired.

That evening my sister Amelia took me aside. "Harry," said she, "I have something very serious to say to you. Susan has had a letter from mother, begging her to stay here until her return. Now, this will keep her with us a month longer at least, and I think this is a very deplorable thing."

"Why so?" I asked.

"Because it will give you an opportunity to carry on your absurd courtship of her, and that cannot fail to end in your marrying her, and I should like to know, Harry, what could be more deplorable than that? In fact, Jenny and I have made up our minds that we will not stand it. Mother may consent to live in the house with that simple Susan as your wife, but we never will."

"My dear sister," said I, "you and Jenny need not trouble yourselves on that subject. I do not in the least desire to marry Susan Mooney. She is a good woman, very good, but she is not the sort of person I would want for a wife. I should think you could see that for yourselves. The life of a hard-working man like myself is monotonous enough without Susan. But now that you have spoken of marriage, I will say that I met two ladies, one in Stockbridge and the other at Lenox, either of whom would make me a good wife. I rather prefer the Lenox girl, Miss Camilla Sunderland. Do you know her?"

"Camilla Sunderland!" exclaimed my sister. "She is a leading belle, a dazzling star of the season. She goes everywhere, does everything, drives four-in-hand, plays tennis-matches, is devoted to balls, theatre-parties—why, my dear Harry, I should think you could not exist with a wife like that."

"Miss Sunderland," said I, leaning back in a soft arm-chair, "would be just the wife I dream of. I am sure I prefer her to the lady at Stockbridge. I am not disposed, as you know, to take part, to any great extent, in the exciting life of the fashionable world, but I should wish to feel that, through my wife, I had a part in it."

"Well!" exclaimed Amelia, "you may never get Camilla Sunderland, but I am truly glad that you have given up all thoughts of Susan. But, Harry, a very great change must have come over you. It was not long ago that you told me you wanted a wife who would tremble at your tread."

I made a gesture of languid disapprobation. "My dear girl," said I, "I should despise a woman who would tremble at my tread. What I want is a wife who will guide, direct, and lead me, upon whom I can lean and depend; and I think Miss Sunderland is such a woman."

Amelia stared at me in utter amazement. "I don't understand you!" she cried. "You seem to have been utterly transformed, and to have lost all sentiments of manliness! If Susan Mooney were a man, I believe she would have very much the same feelings."

"My dear," I answered, "Susan Mooney would make a very good man, a very pleasant and accommodating helpmeet to an active-minded woman."

To this remark Amelia made no answer, but casting a look of scorn upon me she departed.

I HAVE not yet married. Miss Sunderland has not signified to me that it would please her to accept my addresses, and, of course, I have not had the assurance to force the subject upon her. But I live in hopes.

As for the knife that killed Po Hancy, I threw it into the Charles River. It was a dangerous knife.

MY TERMINAL MORAINE

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MY TERMINAL MORAINE

A MAN'S birth is generally considered the most important event of his existence, but I truly think that what I am about to relate was more important to me than my entrance into this world, because, had not these things happened, I am of the opinion that my life would have been of no value to me and my birth a misfortune. My father, Joshua Cuthbert, died soon after I came to my majority, leaving me what he had considered a comfortable property. This consisted of a large house and some forty acres of land, nearly the whole of which lay upon a bluff, which upon three sides descended to a little valley through which ran a gentle stream. I had no brothers or sisters; my mother died when I was a boy; and I, Walter Cuthbert, was left the sole representative of my immediate family.

My estate had been a comfortable one to my father, because his income from the practice of his profession as a physician enabled him to keep it up and provide satisfactorily for himself and me. I had no profession and but a very small income, the result of a few investments my father had made. Left to myself, I felt no inducement to take up any profession or business. My wants were simple, and for a few years I lived without experiencing any inconvenience from the economies which I was obliged to practise. My books, my dog, my gun, and my rod made life pass very pleasantly to me, and the subject of an increase of income never disturbed my mind.

But, as time passed on, the paternal home began to present an air of neglect and even dilapidation, which occasionally attracted my attention, and caused, as I incidentally discovered, a great deal of unfavorable comment among my neighbors, who thought that I should go to work and at least earn money enough to put the house and grounds in a condition which should not be unworthy the memory of the good Dr. Cuthbert. In fact, I began to be looked upon as a shiftless young man, and now and then I found a person old enough and bold enough to tell me so.

But, instead of endeavoring to find some suitable occupation by which I might better my condition and improve my estate, I fell in love, which, in the opinion of my neighbors, was the very worst thing that could have happened to me at this time. I lived in a thrifty region, and for a man who could not support himself to think of taking upon him the support of a wife, especially such a wife as Agnes Havelot would be, was considered more than folly and looked upon as a crime. Everybody knew that I was in love with Miss Havelot, for I went to court her as boldly as I went to fish or shoot. There was a good deal of talk about it, and this finally came to the ears of Mr. Havelot, my lady's father, who thereupon promptly ordered her to have no more to do with me.

The Havelot estate, which adjoined mine, was a very large one, containing hundreds and hundreds of acres;

and the Havelots were rich—rich enough to frighten any poor young man of marrying intent. But I did not appreciate the fact that I was a poor young man. I had never troubled my head about money as it regarded myself, and I now did not trouble my head about it as it regarded Agnes. I loved her, I hoped she loved me, and all other considerations were thrown aside. Mr. Havelot, however, was a man of a different way of thinking.

It was a little time before I became convinced that the decision of Agnes's father that there should be no communication between that dear girl and myself really meant anything. I had never been subjected to restrictions, and I did not understand how people of spirit could submit to them. But I was made to understand it when Mr. Havelot, finding me wandering about his grounds, very forcibly assured me that if I should make my appearance there again, or if he discovered any attempt on my part to communicate with his daughter in any way, he would send her from home. He concluded the very brief interview by stating that if I had any real regard for his daughter's happiness I would cease attentions which met with the most decided disapprobation from her only surviving parent, and which would result in exiling her from home. I begged for one more interview with Miss Havelot, and if it had been granted I should have assured her of the state of my affections, no matter if there were reasons to suppose that I would never see her again. But her father very sternly forbade anything of the kind, and I went away crushed.

It was a very hard case, for if I played the part of a bold lover, and tried to see Agnes without regard to the wicked orders of her father, I should certainly be discovered, and then it would be not only myself, but the poor girl, who would suffer. So I determined that I would submit to the Havelot decree. No matter if I never saw her again, never heard the sound of her voice, it would be better to have her near me, to have her breathe the same air, cast up her eyes at the same sky, listen to the same birds, that I breathed, looked at, and listened to, than to have her far away, probably in Kentucky, where I knew she had relatives, and where the grass was blue and the sky probably green, or, at any rate, would appear so to her if in the least degree she felt as I did in regard to the ties of home and the affinities between the sexes.

I now found myself in a most doleful and even desperate condition of mind. There was nothing in the world that I could have for which I cared. Hunting, fishing, and the rambles through woods and fields that had once been so delightful to me now became tasks I seldom undertook. The only occupation in which I felt the slightest interest was that of sitting in a tower of my house with a telescope, endeavoring to see my Agnes on some portion of her father's grounds. But, although I diligently directed my glass at the slightest stretch of lawn or bit of path which I could discern through openings in the foliage, I never caught sight of her. I knew, however, by means of daily questions addressed to my cook, whose daughter was a servant in the Havelot house, that Agnes was yet at home. For that reason I remained at home. Otherwise I should have become a wanderer.

About a month after I had fallen into this most unhappy state, an old friend came to see me. We had been school-fellows, but he differed from me in almost every respect. He was full of ambition and energy, and, although he was but a few years older than myself, he had already made a name in the world. He was a geologist, earnest and enthusiastic in his studies and his investigations. He told me frankly that the object of his visit was twofold: in the first place, he wanted to see me; and, secondly, he wanted to make some geological examinations on my grounds, which were situated, as he informed me, upon a terminal moraine, a formation which he had not yet had an opportunity of practically investigating.

I had not known that I lived on a moraine, and now that I knew it, I did not care. But Tom Burton glowed with high spirits and lively zeal as he told me how the great bluff on which my house stood, together with the other hills and wooded terraces which stretched away from it along the side of the valley, had been formed by the minute fragments of rock and soil which, during ages and ages, had been gradually pushed down from the mountains by a great glacier which once occupied the country to the northeast of my house.

"Why, Walter, my boy," he cried, "if I had not read it all in the books I should have known for myself, as soon as I came here, that there had once been a glacier up there, and as it gradually moved to the southwest it made this country what it is. Have you a stream down there in that dell which I see lies at right angles with the valley and opens into it?"

"No," said I. "I wish there was one. The only stream we have flows along the valley and not on my property."

Without waiting for me, Tom ran down into my dell, pushed his way through the underbrush to its upper end, and before long came back flushed with heat and enthusiasm.

"Well, sir," he said, "that dell was once the bed of a glacial stream, and you may as well clear it out and plant corn there if you want to, for there never will be another stream flowing through it until there is another glacier out in the country beyond. And now I want you to let me dig about here. I want to find out what sort of stuff the glacier brought down from the mountains. I will hire a man, and will promise you to fill up all the holes I make."

I had no objection to my friend's digging as much as he pleased, and for three days he busied himself in getting samples of the soil of my estate. Sometimes I went out and looked at him, and gradually a little of his earnest ardor infused itself into me, and with some show of interest I looked into the holes he had made and glanced over the mineral specimens he showed me.

"Well, Walter," said he, when he took leave of me, "I am very sorry that I did not discover that the glacier had raked out the bed of a gold-mine from the mountains up there and brought it down to you, or, at any rate, some valuable iron ore. But I am obliged to say it did not do anything of the sort. But I can tell you one thing it brought you, and although it is not of any great commercial value, I should think you could make good use of it here on your place. You have one of the finest deposits of gravel on this bluff that I have met with, and if you were to take out a lot of it and spread it over your driveways and paths, it would make it a great deal pleasanter for you to go about here in bad weather, and would wonderfully improve your property. Good roads always give an idea of thrift and prosperity." Then he went away with a valise nearly full of mineral specimens which he assured me were very interesting.

My interest in geological formations died away as soon as Tom Burton had departed, but what he said about making gravel roads giving the place an air of thrift and prosperity had its effect upon my mind. It struck me that it would be a very good thing if the people in the neighborhood, especially the Havelots, were to perceive on my place some evidences of thrift and prosperity. Most palpable evidences of unthrift and impecuniosity had cut me off from Agnes, and why might it not be that some signs of improved circumstances would remove, to a degree at least, the restrictions which had been placed between us? This was but a very little thing upon which to build hopes, but ever since men and women have loved they have built grand hopes upon very slight foundations. I determined to put my roadways in order.

My efforts in this direction were really evidence of anything but thriftiness, for I could not in the least afford to make my drives and walks resemble the smooth and beautiful roads which wound over the Havelot estate, although to do this was my intention, and I set about the work without loss of time. I took up this occupation with so much earnestness that it seriously interfered with my observations from the tower.

I hired two men and set them to work to dig a gravel-pit. They made excavations at several places, and very soon found what they declared to be a very fine quality of road-gravel. I ordered them to dig on until they had taken out what they believed to be enough to cover all my roads. When this had been done I would have it properly spread and rolled. As this promised to be a very good job, the men went to work in fine spirits, and evidently made up their minds that the improvements I desired would require a vast deal of gravel.

When they had dug a hole so deep that it became difficult to throw up the gravel from the bottom, I suggested that they should dig at some other place. But to this they objected, declaring that the gravel was getting better and better, and it would be well to go on down as long as the quality continued to be so good. So, at last, they put a ladder into the pit, one man carrying the gravel up in a hod, while the other dug it. And when they had gone down so deep that this was no longer practicable, they rigged up a derrick and windlass and drew up the gravel in a bucket.

Had I been of a more practical turn of mind I might have perceived that this method of working made the job a very long and, consequently, to the laborers, a profitable one. But no such idea entered into my head, and not noticing whether they were bringing up sand or gravel, I allowed them to proceed.

One morning I went out to the spot where the excavation was being made, and found that the men had built a fire on the ground near the opening of the pit, and that one of them was bending over it, warming himself. As the month was July, this naturally surprised me, and I inquired the reason for so strange a performance.

"Upon my soul," said the man who was rubbing his hands over the blaze, "I do not wonder you are surprised, but it's so cold down at the bottom of that pit that me fingers is almost frosted. An' we haven't struck any wather neither, which couldn't be expected, of course, a-diggin' down into the hill like this."

I looked into the hole and found it was very deep. "I think it would be better to stop digging here," said I, "and try some other place."

"I wouldn't do that just now," said the other man, who was preparing to go down in the bucket. "To be sure, it's a good deal more like a well than a gravel-pit, but it's bigger at the top than at the bottom, and there's no danger of its cavin' in, and now that we've got everything rigged up all right, it would be a pity to make a change yet awhile."

So I let them go on. But the next day, when I went out again, I found that they had come to the conclusion that it was time to give up digging in that hole. They both declared that it almost froze their feet to stand on the ground where they worked at the bottom of the excavation. The slow business of drawing up the gravel by means of a bucket and windlass was, therefore, reluctantly given up. The men now went to work to dig outward from this pit toward the edge of the bluff which overlooked my little dell, and gradually made a wide trench, which they deepened until —and I am afraid to say how long they worked before this was done—they could walk to the original pit from the level of the dell. They then deepened the inner end of the trench, wheeling out the gravel in barrows, until they had made an inclined pathway from the dell to the bottom of the pit. The wheeling now became difficult, and the men soon declared that they were sure that they had quite gravel enough.

When they made this announcement, and I had gone into some financial calculations, I found that I would be obliged to put an end to my operations, at least for the present, for my available funds were gone, or would be when I had paid what I owed for the work. The men were very much disappointed by the sudden ending of this good job, but they departed, and I was left to gaze upon a vast amount of gravel of which, for the present at least, I could not afford to make the slightest use.

The mental despondency which had been somewhat lightened during my excavating operations now returned, and I became rather more gloomy and downcast than before. My cook declared that it was of no use to prepare meals which I never ate, and suggested that it would save money if I discharged her. As I had not paid her anything for a long time, I did not see how this would benefit me.

Wandering about, one day, with my hat pulled down over my eyes and my hands thrust deep into my pockets, I strolled into the dell, and stood before the wide trench which led to the pit in which I had foolishly sunk the money which should have supported me for months. I entered this dismal passage, and walked slowly and carefully down the incline until I reached the bottom of the original pit, where I had never been before. I stood here, looking up and around me, and wondering how men could bring themselves to dig down into such dreary depths simply for the sake of a few dollars a week, when I involuntarily began to stamp my feet. They were very cold, although I had not been there more than a minute. I wondered at this, and took up some of the loose gravel in my hand. It was quite dry, but it chilled my fingers. I did not understand it, and I did not try to, but walked up the trench and around into the dell, thinking of Agnes.

I was very fond of milk, which, indeed, was almost the only food I now cared for, and I was consequently much disappointed at my noonday meal when I found that the milk had soured and was not fit to drink.

"You see, sir," said Susan, "ice is very scarce and dear, and we can't afford to buy much of it. There was no freezin' weather last winter, and the price has gone up as high as the thermometer, sir, and so, between the two of 'em, I can't keep things from spoilin'."

The idea now came to me that if Susan would take the milk, and anything else she wished to keep cool in this hot weather, to the bottom of the gravel-pit, she would find the temperature there cold enough to preserve them without ice, and I told her so.

The next morning Susan came to me with a pleased countenance and said, "I put the butter and the milk in that pit last night, and the butter's just as hard and the milk's as sweet as if it had been kept in an ice-house. But the place is as cold as an ice-house, sir, and, unless I am mistaken, there's ice in it. Anyway, what do you call that?" And she took from a little basket a piece of grayish ice as large as my fist. "When I found it was so cold down there, sir," she said, "I thought I would dig a little myself and see what made it so. I took a fire-shovel and hatchet, and, when I had scraped away some of the gravel, I came to something hard, and chopped off this piece of it, which is real ice, sir, or I know nothing about it. Perhaps there used to be an ice-house there, and you might get some of it if you dug, though why anybody should put it down so deep, and then cover it up, I'm sure I don't know. But, as long as there's any there, I think we should get it out, even if there's only a little of it, for I cannot take everything down to that pit, and we might as well have it in the refrigerator."

This seemed to me like very good sense, and if I had had a man I should have ordered him to go down to the pit and dig up any lumps of ice he might find and bring them to the house. But I had no man, and I therefore became impressed with the opinion that if I did not want to drink sour milk for the rest of the summer, it might be a good thing for me to go down there and dig out some of the ice myself. So, with pickaxe and shovel, I went to the bottom of the pit and set myself to work.

A few inches below the surface I found that my shovel struck something hard, and clearing away the gravel from this for two or three square feet, I looked down upon a solid mass of ice. It was dirty and begrimed, but it was truly ice. With my pick I detached some large pieces of it. These, with some discomfort, I carried out into the dell, where Susan might come with her basket and get them.

For several days Susan and I took out ice from the pit, and then I thought that perhaps Tom Burton might feel some interest in this frozen deposit in my terminal moraine, and so I wrote to him about it. He did not answer my letter, but instead arrived himself the next afternoon.

"Ice at the bottom of a gravel-pit," said he, "is a thing I never heard of. Will you lend me a spade and a pickaxe?"

When Tom came out of that pit—it was too cold a place for me to go with him and watch his proceedings—I saw him come running toward the house.

"Walter," he shouted, "we must hire all the men we can find, and dig, dig, dig! If I am not mistaken, something has happened on your place that is wonderful almost beyond belief. But we must not stop to talk. We must dig, dig, dig—dig all day and dig all night! Don't think of the cost! I'll attend to that. I'll get the money. What we must do is to find men and set them to work."

"What's the matter?" said I. "What has happened?"

"I haven't time to talk about it now. Besides, I don't want to, for fear I should find I am mistaken. But get on your hat, my dear fellow, and let's go over to the town for men."

The next day there were eight men working under the direction of my friend Burton, and although they did not work at night, as he wished them to do, they labored steadfastly for ten days or more before Tom was ready to announce what it was he had hoped to discover, and whether or not he had found it. For a day or two I watched the workmen from time to time, but after that I kept away, preferring to await the result of my friend's operations. He evidently expected to find something worth having, and whether he was successful or not, it suited me better to know the truth all at once and not by degrees.

On the morning of the eleventh day Tom came into the room where I was reading, and sat down near me. His face was pale, his eyes glittering. "Old friend," said he,—and as he spoke I noticed that his voice was a little husky, although it was plain enough that his emotion was not occasioned by bad fortune,—"my good old friend, I have found out what made the bottom of your gravel-pit so uncomfortably cold. You need not doubt what I am going to tell you, for my excavations have been complete and thorough enough to make me sure of what I say. Don't you remember I told you that ages ago there was a vast glacier in the country which stretches from here to the mountains? Well, sir, the foot of that glacier must have reached farther this way than is generally supposed. At any rate, a portion of it did extend in this direction as far as this bit of the world which is now yours. This end or spur of the glacier, nearly a quarter of a mile in width, I should say, and pushing before it a portion of the terminal moraine on which you live, came slowly toward the valley until suddenly it detached itself from the main glacier and disappeared from sight.

"That is to say, my boy,"—and Tom sprang to his feet, too excited to sit still any longer,—"it descended to the bowels of the earth, at least for a considerable distance in that direction. Now you want to know how this happened. Well, I'll tell you. In this part of the country there are scattered about, here and there, great caves. Geologists know one or two of them, and it is certain that there are others undiscovered. Well, sir, your glacier spur discovered one of them, and when it had lain over the top of it for an age or two, and had grown bigger and bigger, and heavier and heavier, it at last burst through the rock roof of the cave, snapping itself from the rest of the glacier and falling in one vast mass to the bottom of the subterranean abyss. Walter, it is there now!

"The rest of the glacier came steadily down. The moraines were forced before it. They covered this glacier spur, this broken fragment, and by the time the climate changed and the average of temperature rose above that of the glacial period, this vast sunken mass of ice was packed away below the surface of the earth, out of the reach of the action of friction, or heat, or moisture, or anything else which might destroy it. And through all the long procession of centuries that broken end of the glacier has been lying in your terminal moraine. It is there now. It is yours, Walter Cuthbert. It is an ice-mine. It is wealth. And, so far as I can make out, it is nearly all upon your land. To you is the possession, but to me is the glory of the discovery. A bit of the glacial period kept in a cave for us! It is too wonderful to believe! Walter, have you any brandy?"

It may well be supposed that by this time I was thoroughly awakened to the importance and the amazing character of my friend's discovery, and I hurried with him to the scene of operations. There he explained everything, and showed me how, by digging away a portion of the face of the bluff, he had found that this vast fragment of the glacier, which had been so miraculously preserved, ended in an irregularly perpendicular wall, which extended downward he knew not how far, and the edge of it on its upper side had been touched by my workmen in digging their pit. "It was the gradual melting of the upper end of this glacier," said Tom, "probably more elevated than the lower end, that made your dell. I wondered why the depression did not extend farther up toward the spot where the foot of the glacier was supposed to have been. This end of the fragment, being sunk in deeper and afterwards covered up more completely, probably never melted at all."

"It is amazing—astounding!" said I. "But what of it, now that we have found it?"

"What of it?" cried Tom. And his whole form trembled as he spoke. "You have here a source of wealth, of opulence, which shall endure for the rest of your days. Here at your very door, where it can be taken out and transported with the least possible trouble, is ice enough to supply the town, the county, yes, I might say the State, for hundreds of years. No, sir, I cannot go in to supper; I cannot eat. I leave to you the business and practical part of this affair; I go to report upon its scientific features."

"Agnes," I exclaimed, as I walked to the house with my hands clasped and my eyes raised to the sky, "the glacial period has given thee to me!"

This did not immediately follow, although I went that very night to Mr. Havelot and declared to him that I was now rich enough to marry his daughter. He laughed at me in a manner which was very annoying, and made certain remarks which indicated that he thought it probable that it was not the roof of the cave, but my mind, which had given way under the influence of undue pressure.

The contemptuous manner in which I had been received aroused within me a very unusual state of mind. While talking to Mr. Havelot I heard not far away in some part of the house a voice singing. It was the voice of Agnes, and I believed she sang so that I could hear her. But as her sweet tones reached my ear there came to me at the same time the harsh, contemptuous words of her father. I left the house determined to crush that man to the earth beneath a superincumbent mass of ice—or the evidence of the results of the ownership of such a mass—which would make him groan and weep as he apologized to me for his scornful and disrespectful utterances, and at the same time offer me the hand of his daughter.

When the discovery of the ice-mine, as it grew to be called, became generally known, my grounds were crowded by sight-seers, and reporters of newspapers were more plentiful than squirrels. But the latter were referred to Burton, who gladly talked to them as long as they could afford to listen, and I felt myself at last compelled to shut my gates to the former.

I had offers of capital to develop this novel source of wealth, and I accepted enough of this assistance to enable me to begin operations on a moderate scale. It was considered wise not to uncover any portion of the glacier spur, but to construct an inclined shaft down to its wall-like end, and, from this, tunnel into the great mass. Immediately the leading ice company of the neighboring town contracted with me for all the ice I could furnish, and the flood-gates of affluence began slowly to rise.

The earliest, and certainly one of the greatest, benefits which came to me from this bequest from the prehistoric past was the new energy and vigor with which my mind and body were now infused. My old, careless method of life and my recent melancholy, despairing mood were gone, and I now began to employ myself upon the main object of my life with an energy and enthusiasm almost equal to that of my friend Tom Burton. This present object of my life was to prepare my home for Agnes.

The great piles of gravel which my men had dug from the well-like pit were spread upon the roadways and rolled smooth and hard. My lawn was mowed, my flower-beds and borders put in order, useless bushes and undergrowth cut out and cleared away, my outbuildings were repaired, and the grounds around my house rapidly assumed their old appearance of neatness and beauty. Ice was very scarce that summer, and as the wagons wound away from the opening of the shaft which led down to the glacier, carrying their loads to the nearest railway station, so money came to me—not in large sums at first, for preparations had not yet been perfected for taking out the ice in great quantities, but enough to enable me to go on with my work as rapidly as I could plan it. I set about renovating and brightening and newly furnishing my house. Whatever I thought Agnes would like I bought and put into it. I tried to put myself in her place as I selected the paper-hangings and the materials with which to cover the furniture.

Sometimes, while thus employed selecting ornaments or useful articles for my house, and using, as far as was possible, the taste and judgment of another instead of my own, the idea came to me that perhaps Agnes had never heard of my miraculous good fortune. Certainly her father would not be likely to inform her, and perhaps she still thought of me, if she thought at all, as the poor young man from whom she had been obliged to part because he was poor.

But whether she knew that I was growing rich, or whether she thought I was becoming poorer and poorer, I thought only of the day when I could go to her father and tell him that I was able to take his daughter and place her in a home as beautiful as that in which she now lived, and maintain her with all the comforts and luxuries which he could give her.

One day I asked my faithful cook, who also acted as my housekeeper and general supervisor, to assist me in making out a list of china which I intended to purchase.

"Are you thinkin' of buyin' china, sir?" she asked. "We have now quite as much as we really need."

"Oh, yes," said I. "I shall get complete sets of everything that can be required for a properly furnished household."

Susan gave a little sigh. "You are spendin' a lot of money, sir, and some of it for things that a single gentleman would be likely not to care very much about. And if you was to take it into your head to travel and stay away for a year or two, there's a good many things you've bought that would look shabby when you come back, no matter how careful I might be in dustin' 'em and keepin' 'em covered."

"But I have no idea of travelling," said I. "There's no place so pleasant as this to me."

Susan was silent for a few moments, and then she said: "I know very well why you are doin' all this, and I feel it my bounden duty to say to you that there's a chance of its bein' no use. I don't speak without good reason, and I wouldn't do it if I didn't think that it might make trouble lighter to you when it comes."

"What are you talking about, Susan? What do you mean?"

"Well, sir, this is what I mean: It was only last night that my daughter Jane was in Mr. Havelot's dinin'-room after dinner was over, and Mr. Havelot and a friend of his were sittin' there, smokin' their cigars and drinkin' their coffee. She went in and come out again as she was busy takin' away the dishes, and they paid no attention to her, but went on talkin', without knowin', most likely, she was there. Mr. Havelot and the gentleman was talkin' about you, and Jane she heard Mr. Havelot say as plain as anything, and she said she couldn't be mistaken, that even if your nonsensical ice-mine proved to be worth anything, he would never let his daughter marry an iceman. He spoke most disrespectful of icemen, sir, and said that it would make him sick to have a son-in-law whose business it was to sell ice to butchers, and hotels, and grog-shops, and pork-packers, and all that sort of people, and that he would as soon have his daughter marry the man who supplied a hotel with sausages as the one who supplied it with ice to keep those sausages from spoilin'. You see, sir, Mr. Havelot lives on his property as his father did before him, and he is a very proud man, with a heart as hard and cold as that ice down under your land. And it's borne in on me very strong, sir, that it would be a bad thing for you to keep on thinkin' that you are gettin' this house all ready to bring Miss Havelot to when you have married her. For if Mr. Havelot keeps on livin', which there's every chance of his doin', it may be many a weary year before you get Miss Agnes, if you ever get her. And havin' said that, sir, I say no more, and I would not have said this much if I hadn't felt it my bounden duty to your father's son to warn him that most likely he was workin' for what he might never get, and so keep him from breakin' his heart when he found out the truth all of a sudden."

With that Susan left me, without offering any assistance in making out a list of china. This was a terrible story. But, after all, it was founded only upon servants' gossip. In this country, even proud, rich men like Mr. Havelot did not have such absurd ideas regarding the source of wealth. Money is money, and whether it is derived from the ordinary products of the earth, from which came much of Mr. Havelot's revenue, or from an extraordinary project such as my glacier spur, it truly could not matter so far as concerned the standing in society of its possessor. What utter absurdity was this which Susan had told me! If I were to go to Mr. Havelot and tell him that I would not marry his daughter because he supplied brewers and bakers with the products of his fields, would he not consider me an idiot? I determined to pay no attention to the idle tale. But alas! determinations of that sort are often of little avail. I did pay attention to it, and my spirits drooped.

The tunnel into the glacier spur had now attained considerable length, and the ice in the interior was found to be of a much finer quality than that first met with, which was of a grayish hue and somewhat inclined to crumble. When the workmen reached a grade of ice as good as they could expect, they began to enlarge the tunnel into a chamber, and from this they proposed to extend tunnels in various directions, after the fashion of a coal-mine. The ice was hauled out on sledges through the tunnel and then carried up a wooden railway to the mouth of the shaft.

It was comparatively easy to walk down the shaft and enter the tunnel, and when it happened that the men were not at work I allowed visitors to go down and view this wonderful ice-cavern. The walls of the chamber appeared semi-transparent, and the light of the candles or lanterns gave the whole scene a weird and beautiful aspect. It was almost possible to imagine one's self surrounded by limpid waters, which might at any moment rush upon him and engulf him.

Every day or two Tom Burton came with a party of scientific visitors, and had I chosen to stop the work of taking out ice, admitted the public and charged a price for admission, I might have made almost as much money as I, at that time, derived from the sale of the ice. But such a method of profit was repugnant to me.

For several days after Susan's communication to me, I worked on in my various operations, endeavoring to banish from my mind the idle nonsense she had spoken of. But one of its effects upon me was to make me feel that I ought not to allow hopes so important to rest upon uncertainties. So I determined that as soon as my house and grounds should be in a condition with which I should for the time be satisfied, I would go boldly to Mr. Havelot, and, casting out of my recollection everything that Susan had said, invite him to visit me and see for himself the results of the discovery of which he had spoken with such derisive contempt. This would be a straightforward and business-like answer to his foolish objections to me, and I believed that in his heart the old gentleman would properly appreciate my action.

About this time there came to my place Aaron Boyce, an elderly farmer of the neighborhood, and finding me outside, he seized the opportunity to have a chat with me.

"I tell you what it is, Mr. Cuthbert," said he, "the people in this neighborhood hasn't give you credit for what's in you. The way you have fixed up this place, and the short time you have took to do it, is enough to show us now what sort of a man you are. And I tell you, sir, we're proud of you for a neighbor. I don't believe there's another gentleman in this county of your age that could have done what you have done in so short a time. I expect now you will be thinkin' of gettin' married and startin' housekeepin' in a regular fashion. That comes just as natural as to set hens in the spring. By the way, have you heard that old Mr. Havelot's thinkin' of goin' abroad? I didn't believe he would ever do that again, because he's gettin' pretty well on in years, but old men will do queer things, as well as young ones."

"Going abroad!" I cried. "Does he intend to take his daughter with him?"

Mr. Aaron Boyce smiled grimly. He was a great old gossip, and he had already obtained the information he wanted. "Yes," he said, "I've heard it was on her account he's goin'. She's been kind of weakly lately, they tell me, and hasn't took to her food, and the doctors has said that what she wants is a sea voyage and a change to foreign parts."

Going abroad! Foreign parts! This was more terrible than anything I had imagined. I would go to Mr. Havelot that very evening, the only time which I would be certain to find him at home, and talk to him in a way which would be sure to bring him to his senses, if he had any. And if I should find that he had no sense of propriety or justice, no sense of his duty to his fellow-man and to his offspring, then I would begin a bold fight for Agnes, a fight which I would not give up until, with her own lips, she told me it would be useless. I would follow her to Kentucky, to Europe, to the uttermost ends of the earth. I could do it now; the frozen deposits in my terminal moraine would furnish me with the means. I walked away and left the old farmer standing grinning. No doubt my improvements and renovations had been the subject of gossip in the neighborhood, and he had come over to see if he could find out anything definite in regard to the object of them. He had succeeded, but he had done more: he had nerved me to instantly begin the conquest of Agnes, whether by diplomacy or war.

I was so anxious to begin this conquest that I could scarcely wait for the evening to come. At the noon-hour, when the ice-works were deserted, I walked down the shaft and into the ice-chamber to see what had been done since my last visit. I decided to insist that operations upon a larger scale should be immediately begun, in order that I might have plenty of money with which to carry on my contemplated campaign. Whether it was one of peace or war, I should want all the money I could get.

I took with me a lantern, and went around the chamber, which was now twenty-five or thirty feet in diameter, examining the new inroads which had been made upon its walls. There was a tunnel commenced opposite the one by which the chamber was entered, but it had not been opened more than a dozen feet, and it seemed to me that the men had not been working with any very great energy. I wanted to see a continuous stream of ice-blocks from that chamber to the mouth of the shaft.

While grumbling thus I heard behind me a sudden noise like thunder and the crashing of walls, and turning quickly, I saw that a portion of the roof of the chamber had fallen in! Nor had it ceased to fall. As I gazed several great masses of ice came down from above and piled themselves upon that which had already fallen.

Startled and frightened, I sprang toward the opening of the entrance tunnel. But alas! I found that that was the point where the roof had given away, and between me and the outer world was a wall of solid ice, through which it would be as impossible for me to break as if it were a barrier of rock. With the quick instinct which comes to men in danger, I glanced about to see if the workmen had left their tools. But there were none; they had been taken outside. Then I stood and gazed stupidly at the mass of fallen ice, which, even as I looked upon it, was cracking and snapping, pressed down by the weight above it, and forming itself into an impervious barrier, without crevice or open seam.

Then I madly shouted. But of what avail were shouts down there in the depths of the earth? I soon ceased this useless expenditure of strength, and, with my lantern in my hand, began to walk around the chamber, throwing the light upon the walls and the roof. I became impressed with the fear that the whole cavity might cave in at once and bury me here in a tomb of ice. But I saw no cracks, nor any sign of further disaster. But why think of anything more? Was not this enough? For, before that ice-barrier could be cleared away, would I not freeze to death?

I now continued to walk, not because I expected to find anything or to do anything, but simply to keep myself warm by action. As long as I could move about, I believed that there was no immediate danger of succumbing to the intense cold, for, when a young man, travelling in Switzerland, I had been in the cave of a glacier, and it was not cold enough to prevent some old women from sitting there to play the zither for the sake of a few coppers from visitors. But I could not expect to be able to continue walking until I should be rescued, and if I sat down, or by chance slept from exhaustion, I must perish.

The more I thought of it, the more sure I became that in any case I must perish. A man in a block of ice could have no chance of life. And Agnes! Oh, heavens! what demon of the ice had leagued with old Havelot to shut me up in this frozen prison? For a long time I continued to walk, beat my body with my arms, and stamp my feet. The instinct of life was strong within me. I would live as long as I could, and think of Agnes. When I should be frozen I could not think of her.

Sometimes I stopped and listened. I was sure I could hear noises, but I could not tell whether they were above me or not. In the centre of the ice-barrier, about four feet from the ground, was a vast block of the frozen substance which was unusually clear and seemed to have nothing on the other side of it, for through it I could see flickers of light, as though people were going about with lanterns. It was quite certain that the accident had been discovered, for, had not the thundering noise been heard by persons outside, the workmen would have seen what had happened as soon as they came into the tunnel to begin their afternoon operations.

At first I wondered why they did not set to work with a will and cut away this barrier and let me out. But there suddenly came to my mind a reason for this lack of energy which was more chilling than the glistening walls around me: Why should they suppose that I was in the ice-chamber? I was not in the habit of coming here very often, but I was in the habit of wandering off by myself at all hours of the day. This thought made me feel that I might as well lie down on the floor of this awful cave and die at once. The workmen might think it unsafe to mine any farther in this part of the glacier, and begin operations at some other point. I did sit down for a moment, and then I rose involuntarily and began my weary round. Suddenly I thought of looking at my watch. It was nearly five o'clock. I had been more than four hours in that dreadful place, and I did not believe that I could continue to exercise my limbs very much longer. The lights I had seen had ceased. It was quite plain that the workmen had no idea that any one was imprisoned in the cave.

But soon after I had come to this conclusion I saw through the clear block of ice a speck of light, and it became stronger and stronger, until I believed it to be close to the other side of the block. There it remained stationary. But there seemed to be other points of light, which moved about in a strange way, and near it. Now I stood by the block, watching. When my feet became very cold, I stamped them. But there I stood fascinated, for what I saw was truly surprising. A large coal of fire appeared on the other side of the block. Then it suddenly vanished and was succeeded by another coal. This disappeared, and another took its place, each one seeming to come nearer and nearer to me. Again and again did these coals appear. They reached the centre of the block. They approached my side of it. At last one was so near to me that I thought it was about to break through; but it vanished. Then there came a few quick thuds, and the end of a piece of iron protruded from the block. This was withdrawn, and through the aperture there came a voice which said: "Mr. Cuthbert, are you in there?" It was the voice of Agnes!

Weak and cold as I was, fire and energy rushed through me at these words. "Yes!" I exclaimed, my mouth to the hole. "Agnes, is that you?"

"Wait a minute," came from the other side of the aperture. "I must make it bigger. I must keep it from closing up."

Again came the coals of fire, running backward and forward through the long hole in the block of ice. I could see now what they were: they were irons used by plumbers for melting solder and that sort of thing, and Agnes was probably heating them in a little furnace outside, and withdrawing them as fast as they cooled. It was not long before the aperture was very much enlarged, and then there came grating through it a long tin tube nearly two inches in diameter, which almost, but not quite, reached my side of the block.

Now came again the voice of Agnes: "Oh, Mr. Cuthbert, are you truly there? Are you crushed? Are you wounded? Are you nearly frozen? Are you starved? Tell me quickly if you are yet safe."

Had I stood in a palace padded with the softest silk and filled with spicy odors from a thousand rose-gardens, I could not have been better satisfied with my surroundings than I was at that moment. Agnes was not two feet away! She was telling me that she cared for me! In a very few words I assured her that I was uninjured. Then I was on the point of telling her I loved her, for I believed that not a moment should be lost in making this avowal. I could not die without her knowing that. But the appearance of a mass of paper at the other end of the tube prevented the expression of my sentiments. This was slowly pushed on until I could reach it. Then there came the words: "Mr. Cuthbert, these are sandwiches. Eat them immediately, and walk about while you are doing it. You must keep yourself warm until the men get to you."

Obedient to the slightest wish of this dear creature, I went twice around the cave, devouring the sandwiches as I walked. They were the most delicious food I had ever tasted. They were given to me by Agnes! I came back to the opening. I could not immediately begin my avowal. I must ask a question first. "Can they get to me?" I inquired. "Is anybody trying to do that? Are they working there by you? I do not hear them at all."

"Oh, no," she answered. "They are not working here. They are on top of the bluff, trying to dig down to you. They were afraid to meddle with the ice here, for fear that more of it might come down and crush you and the men, too. Oh, there has been a dreadful excitement since it was found that you were in there!"

"How could they know I was here?" I asked.

"It was your old Susan who first thought of it. She saw you walking toward the shaft about noon, and then she remembered that she had not seen you again. And when they came into the tunnel here, they found one of the lanterns gone, and the big stick you generally carry lying where the lantern had been. Then it was known that you must be inside. Oh, then there was an awful time! The foreman of the icemen examined everything, and said they must dig down to you from above. He put his men to work; but they could do very little, for they had hardly any spades. Then they sent into town for help, and over to the new park for the Italians working there. From the way these men set to work you might have thought that they would dig away the whole bluff in about five minutes, but they didn't. Nobody seemed to know what to do, or how to get to work, and the hole they made, when they did begin, was filled up with men almost as fast as they threw out the stones and gravel. I don't believe anything would have been done properly if your friend Mr. Burton hadn't happened to come with two scientific gentlemen, and since that he has been directing everything. You can't think what a splendid fellow he is! I fairly adored him when I saw him giving his orders and making everybody skip around in the right way."

"Tom is a very good man," said I, "but it is his business to direct that sort of work, and it is not surprising that he knows how to do it. But, Agnes, they may never get down to me, and we do not know that this roof may not cave in upon me at any moment. And before this or anything else happens I want to tell you—"

"Mr. Cuthbert," said Agnes, "is there plenty of oil in your lantern? It would be dreadful if it were to go out and leave you there in the dark. I thought of that, and brought you a little bottle of kerosene so that you can fill it. I am going to push the bottle through now, if you please." And with this a large phial, cork-end foremost, came slowly through the tube, propelled by one of the soldering-irons. Then came Agnes's voice: "Please fill your lantern immediately, because if it goes out you cannot find it in the dark; and then walk several times around the cave, for you have been standing still too long already."

I obeyed these injunctions, but in two or three minutes was again at the end of the tube. "Agnes," said I, "how did you happen to come here? Did you contrive in your own mind this method of communicating with me?"

"Oh, yes, I did," she said. "Everybody said that this mass of ice must not be meddled with, but I knew very well it would not hurt it to make a hole through it."

"But how did you happen to be here?" I asked.

"Oh, I ran over as soon as I heard of the accident. Everybody ran here. The whole neighborhood is on top of the bluff. But nobody wanted to come into the tunnel, because they were afraid that more of it might fall in. So I was able to work here all by myself; and I am very glad of it. I saw the soldering-iron and the little furnace outside of your house, where the plumbers had been using them, and I brought them here myself. Then I thought that a simple hole through the ice might soon freeze up again, and if you were alive inside I could not do anything to help you. And so I ran home and got my diploma-case, that had had one end melted out of it, and I brought that to stick in the hole. I'm so glad that it is long enough, or almost."

"Oh, Agnes," I cried, "you thought of all this for me?"

"Why, of course, Mr. Cuthbert," she answered, before I had a chance to say anything more. "You were in great danger of perishing before the men got to you, and nobody seemed to think of any way to give you immediate relief. And don't you think that a collegiate education is a good thing for girls—at least, that it was for me?"

"Agnes," I exclaimed, "please let me speak. I want to tell you—I must tell you—"

But the voice of Agnes was clearer than mine, and it overpowered my words. "Mr. Cuthbert," she said, "we cannot both speak through this tube at the same time in opposite directions. I have here a bottle of water for you, but I am very much afraid it will not go through the diploma-case."

"Oh, I don't want any water," I said. "I can eat ice if I am thirsty. What I want is to tell you—"

"Mr. Cuthbert," said she, "you must not eat that ice. Water that was frozen countless ages ago may be very different from the water of modern times, and might not agree with you. Don't touch it, please. I am going to push the bottle through if I can. I tried to think of everything that you might need, and brought them all at once, because, if I could not keep the hole open, I wanted to get them to you without losing a minute."

Now the bottle came slowly through. It was a small beer-bottle, I think, and several times I was afraid it was going to stick fast and cut off communication between me and the outer world—that is to say, between me and Agnes. But at last the cork and the neck appeared, and I pulled it through. I did not drink any of it, but immediately applied my mouth to the tube.

"Agnes," I said, "my dear Agnes, really you must not prevent me from speaking. I cannot delay another minute. This is an awful position for me to be in, and as you don't seem to realize—"

"But I do realize, Mr. Cuthbert, that if you don't walk about you will certainly freeze before you can be rescued. Between every two or three words you want to take at least one turn around that place. How dreadful it would be if you were suddenly to become benumbed and stiff! Everybody is thinking of that. The best diggers that Mr. Burton had were three colored men. But after they had gone down nothing like as deep as a well, they came up frightened, and said they would not dig another shovelful for the whole world. Perhaps you don't know it, but there's a story about the neighborhood that the negro hell is under your property. You know many of the colored people expect to be everlastingly punished with ice and not with fire—"

"Agnes," I interrupted, "I am punished with ice and fire both. Please let me tell you—"

"I was going on to say, Mr. Cuthbert," she interrupted, "that when the Italians heard why the colored men had come out of the hole they would not go in either, for they are just as afraid of everlasting ice as the negroes are, and were sure that if the bottom came out of that hole they would fall into a frozen lower world. So there was nothing to do but to send for paupers, and they are working now. You know paupers have to do what they are told without regard to their beliefs. They got a dozen of them from the poorhouse. Somebody said they just threw them into the hole. Now I must stop talking, for it is time for you to walk around again. Would you like another sandwich?"

"Agnes," said I, endeavoring to speak calmly, "all I want is to be able to tell you—"

"And when you walk, Mr. Cuthbert, you had better keep around the edge of the chamber, for there is no knowing when they may come through. Mr. Burton and the foreman of the icemen measured the bluff so that they say the hole they are making is exactly over the middle of the chamber you are in, and if you walk around the edge the pieces may not fall on you."

"If you don't listen to me, Agnes," I said, "I'll go and sit anywhere, everywhere, where death may come to me quickest. Your coldness is worse than the coldness of the cave. I cannot bear it."

"But, Mr. Cuthbert," said Agnes, speaking, I thought, with some agitation, "I have been listening to you, and what more can you possibly have to say? If there is anything you want, let me know. I will run and get it for you."

"There is no need that you should go away to get what I want," I said. "It is there with you. It is you."

"Mr. Cuthbert," said Agnes, in a very low voice, but so distinctly that I could hear every word, "don't you think it would be better for you to give your whole mind to keeping yourself warm and strong? For if you let yourself get benumbed you may sink down and freeze."

"Agnes," I said, "I will not move from this little hole until I have told you that I love you, that I have no reason to care for life or rescue unless you return my love, unless you are willing to be mine. Speak quickly to me, Agnes, because I may not be rescued, and may never know whether my love for you is returned or not."

At this moment there was a tremendous crash behind me, and turning, I saw a mass of broken ice upon the floor of the cave, with a cloud of dust and smaller fragments still falling. And then, with a great scratching and scraping, and a howl loud enough to waken the echoes of all the lower regions, down came a red-headed, drunken shoemaker. I cannot say that he was drunk at that moment, but I knew the man the moment I saw his carroty poll, and it was drink which had sent him to the poorhouse.

But the sprawling and howling cobbler did not reach the floor. A rope had been fastened around his waist to prevent a fall in case the bottom of the pit should suddenly give way, and he hung dangling in mid-air, with white face and distended eyes, cursing and swearing and vociferously entreating to be pulled up. But before he received any answer from above, or I could speak to him, there came through the hole in the roof of the cave a shower of stones and gravel, and with them a frantic Italian, his legs and arms outspread, his face wild with terror.

Just as he appeared in view he grasped the rope of the cobbler, and though in a moment he came down heavily upon the floor of the chamber, this broke his fall, and he did not appear to be hurt. Instantly he crouched low and almost upon all fours, and began to run around the chamber, keeping close to the walls, and screaming—I suppose to his saints to preserve him from the torments of the frozen damned.

In the midst of this hubbub came the voice of Agnes through the hole: "Oh, Mr. Cuthbert, what has happened? Are you alive?"

I was so disappointed by the appearance of these wretched interlopers at the moment it was about to be decided whether my life—should it last for years, or but for a few minutes—was to be black or bright, and I was so shaken and startled by the manner of their entry upon the scene, that I could not immediately shape the words necessary to inform Agnes what had happened. But, collecting my faculties, I was about to speak, when suddenly, with the force of the hind leg of a mule, I was pushed away from the aperture, and the demoniac Italian clapped his great mouth to the end of the tube and roared through it a volume of oaths and supplications. I attempted to thrust aside the wretched being, but I might as well have tried to move the ice-barrier itself. He had perceived that some one outside was talking to me, and in his frenzy he was imploring that some one should let him out.

While still endeavoring to move the man, I was seized by the arm, and turning, beheld the pallid face of the shoemaker. They had let him down so that he reached the floor. He tried to fall on his knees before me, but the rope was so short that he was able to go only part of the way down, and presented a most ludicrous appearance, with his toes scraping the icy floor and his arms thrown out as if he were paddling like a tadpole. "Oh, have mercy upon me, sir," he said, "and help me get out of this dreadful place. If you go to the hole and call up it's you, they will pull me up; but if they get you out first they will never think of me. I am a poor pauper, sir, but I never did nothin' to be packed in ice before I am dead."

Noticing that the Italian had left the end of the aperture in the block of ice, and that he was now shouting up the open shaft, I ran to the channel of communication which my Agnes had opened for me, and called through it; but the dear girl had gone.

The end of a ladder now appeared at the opening in the roof, and this was let down until it reached the floor. I started toward it; but before I had gone half the distance the frightened shoemaker and the maniac Italian sprang upon it, and, with shrieks and oaths, began a maddening fight for possession of the ladder. They might quickly have gone up one after the other, but each had no thought but to be first, and as one seized the rounds he was pulled away by the other, until I feared the ladder would be torn to pieces. The shoemaker finally pushed his way up a little distance, when the Italian sprang upon his back, endeavoring to climb over him. And so on they went up the shaft, fighting, swearing, kicking, scratching, shaking and wrenching the ladder, which had been tied to another one in order to increase its length, so that it was in danger of breaking, and tearing at each other in a fashion which made it wonderful that they did not both tumble headlong downward. They went on up, so completely filling the shaft with their struggling forms and their wild cries that I could not see or hear anything, and was afraid, in fact, to look up toward the outer air.

As I was afterwards informed, the Italian, who had slipped into the hole by accident, ran away like a frightened hare the moment he got his feet on firm ground, and the shoemaker sat down and swooned. By this performance he obtained from a benevolent bystander a drink of whiskey, the first he had had since he was committed to the poorhouse.

But a voice soon came down the shaft, calling to me. I recognized it as that of Tom Burton, and replied that I was safe, and that I was coming up the ladder. But in my attempt to climb I found that I was unable to do so. Chilled and stiffened by the cold, and weakened by fatigue and excitement, I believe I never should have been able to leave that ice-chamber if my faithful friend had not come down the ladder and vigorously assisted me to reach the outer air.

Seated on the ground, my back against a great oak-tree, I was quickly surrounded by a crowd of my neighbors, the workmen, and the people who had been drawn to the spot by the news of the strange accident, to gaze at me as if I were some unknown being excavated from the bowels of the earth. I was sipping some brandy and water which Burton had handed me, when Aaron Boyce pushed himself in front of me.

"Well, sir," he said, "I am mighty glad you got out of that scrape. I'm bound to say I didn't expect you would. I have been sure all along that it wasn't right to meddle with things that go ag'in' nature, and I haven't any doubt that you'll see that for yourself, and fill up all them tunnels and shafts you've made. The ice that comes on ponds and rivers was good enough for our forefathers, and it ought to be good enough for us. And as for this cold stuff you find in your gravel-pit, I don't believe it's ice at all; and if it is, like as not it's made of some sort of pizen stuff that freezes easier than water. For everybody knows that water don't freeze in a well, and if it don't do that, why should it do it in any kind of a hole in the ground? So perhaps it's just as well that you did git shut up there, sir, and find out for yourself what a dangerous thing it is to fool with nature and try to git ice from the bottom of the ground instead of the top of the water."

This speech made me angry, for I knew that old Boyce was a man who was always glad to get hold of anything which had gone wrong and try to make it worse; but I was too weak to answer him.

This, however, would not have been necessary, for

Tom Burton turned upon him. "Idiot!" said he, "if that is your way of thinking, you might as well say that if a well caves in you should never again dig for water, or that nobody should have a cellar under his house for fear that the house should fall into it. There's no more danger of the ice beneath us ever giving way again than there is that this bluff should crumble under our feet. That break in the roof of the ice-tunnel was caused by my digging away the face of the bluff very near that spot. The high temperature of the outer air weakened the ice, and it fell. But down here, under this ground and secure from the influences of the heat of the outer air, the mass of ice is more solid than rock. We will build a brick arch over the place where the accident happened, and then there will not be a safer mine on this continent than this ice-mine will be."

This was a wise and diplomatic speech from Burton, and it proved to be of great service to me, for the men who had been taking out ice had been a good deal frightened by the fall of the tunnel, and when it was proved that what Burton had said in regard to the cause of the weakening of the ice was entirely correct, they became willing to go to work again.

I now began to feel stronger and better, and rising to my feet, I glanced here and there into the crowd, hoping to catch a sight of Agnes. But I was not very much surprised at not seeing her, because she would naturally shrink from forcing herself into the midst of this motley company. But I felt that I must go and look for her without the loss of a minute, for if she should return to her father's house I might not be able to see her again.

On the outskirts of the crowd I met Susan, who was almost overpowered with joy at seeing me safe again. I shook her by the hand, but, without replying to her warm-hearted protestations of thankfulness and delight, I asked her if she had seen Miss Havelot.

"Miss Agnes!" she exclaimed. "Why, no, sir. I expect she's at home. And if she did come here with the rest of the neighbors, I didn't see her, for when I found out what had happened, sir, I was so weak that I sat down in the kitchen all of a lump, and have just had strength enough to come out."

"Oh, I know she was here," I cried. "I am sure of that, and I do hope she's not gone home again."

"Know she was here!" exclaimed Susan. "Why, how on earth could you know that?"

I did not reply that it was not on the earth but under it that I became aware of the fact, but hurried toward the Havelot house, hoping to overtake Agnes if she had gone that way. But I did not see her, and suddenly a startling idea struck me, and I turned and ran home as fast as I could go. When I reached my grounds I went directly to the mouth of the shaft. There was nobody there, for the crowd was collected into a solid mass on the top of the bluff, listening to a lecture from Tom Burton, who deemed it well to promote the growth of interest and healthy opinion in regard to his wonderful discovery and my valuable possession. I hurried down the shaft, and near the end of it, just before it joined the ice-tunnel, I beheld Agnes sitting upon the wooden track. She was not unconscious, for as I approached she slightly turned her head. I sprang toward her; I kneeled beside her; I took her in my arms. "Oh, Agnes, dearest Agnes," I cried, "what is the matter? What has happened to you? Has a piece of ice fallen upon you? Have you slipped and hurt yourself?"

She turned her beautiful eyes up toward me and for a moment did not speak. Then she said: "And they got you out? And you are in your right mind?"

"Right mind!" I exclaimed. "I have never been out of my mind. What are you thinking of?"

"Oh, you must have been," she said, "when you screamed at me in that horrible way. I was so frightened that I fell back, and I must have fainted."

Tremulous as I was with love and anxiety, I could not help laughing. "Oh, my dear Agnes, I did not scream at you. That was a crazed Italian who fell through the hole that they dug." Then I told her what had happened.

She heaved a gentle sigh. "I am so glad to hear that," she said. "There was one thing that I was thinking about just before you came, and which gave me a little bit of comfort: the words and yells I heard were dreadfully oniony, and somehow or other I could not connect that sort of thing with you."

It now struck me that during this conversation I had been holding my dear girl in my arms, and she had not shown the slightest sign of resistance or disapprobation. This made my heart beat high. "Oh, Agnes," I said, "I truly believe you love me, or you would not have been here—you would not have done for me all that you did. Why did you not answer me when I spoke to you through that wall of ice, through the hole your dear love had made in it? Why, when I was in such a terrible situation, not knowing whether I was to die or live, did you not comfort my heart with one sweet word?"

"Oh, Walter," she answered, "it wasn't at all necessary for you to say all that you did say, for I had suspected it before, and as soon as you began to call me Agnes I knew, of course, how you felt about it. And, besides, it really was necessary that you should move about to keep yourself from freezing. But the great reason for my not encouraging you to go on talking in that way was that I was afraid people might come into the tunnel, and as, of course, you would not know that they were there, you would go on making love to me through my diploma-case, and you know I should have perished with shame if I had had to stand here, with that old Mr. Boyce, and I don't know who else, listening to your words—which were very sweet to me, Walter, but which would have sounded awfully funny to them."

When she said that my words had been sweet to her I dropped the consideration of all other subjects.

When, about ten minutes afterwards, we came out of the shaft, we were met by Susan.

"Bless my soul and body, Mr. Cuthbert!" she exclaimed. "Did you find that young lady down there in the centre of the earth? It seems to me as if everything that you want comes to you out of the ground. But I have been looking for you to tell you that Mr. Havelot has been here after his daughter, and I'm sure, if he had known where she was, he would have been scared out of his wits."

"Father here!" exclaimed Agnes. "Where is he now?"

"I think he has gone home, miss. Indeed, I'm sure of it; for my daughter Jennie, who was over here the same as all the other people in the county, I truly believe, told him—and I was proud she had the spirit to speak up that way to him—that your heart was almost broke when you heard about Mr. Cuthbert being shut up in the ice, and that most likely you was in your own room a-cryin' your eyes out. When he heard that, he stood lookin' all around the place, and then he asked me if he might go in the house. When I told him he was most welcome, he went in. I offered to show him about, which he said was no use, that he had been there often enough. And he went everywhere, I truly believe, except in the garret and the cellar. After he got through with that he went out to the barn, and then walked home."

"I must go to him immediately," said Agnes.

"But not alone," said I. And together we walked through the woods, over the little field, and across the Havelot lawn to the house. We were told that the old gentleman was in his library, and together we entered the room.

Mr. Havelot was sitting by a table on which were lying several open volumes of an encyclopedia. When he turned and saw us, he closed his book, pushed back his chair, and took off his spectacles. "Upon my word, sir!" he cried. "So the first thing you do after they pull you out of the earth is to come here and break my commands."

"I came on the invitation of your daughter, sir."

"And what right has she to invite you, I'd like to know?"

"She has every right, for to her I owe my existence."

"What rabid nonsense!" exclaimed the old gentleman. "People don't owe their existence to the silly creatures they fall in love with."

"I assure you I am correct, sir." And then I related to him what his daughter had done, and how, through her angelic agency, my rescuers had found me a living being instead of a frozen corpse.

"Stuff!" said Mr. Havelot. "People can live in a temperature of thirty-two degrees above zero all winter. Out in Minnesota they think that's hot. And you gave him victuals and drink through your diploma-case! Well, miss, I told you that if you tried to roast chestnuts in that diploma-case the bottom would come out."

"But you see, father," said Agnes, earnestly, "the reason I did that was because when I roasted them in anything shallow they popped into the fire, but they could not jump out of the diploma-case."

"Well, something else seems to have jumped out of it," said the old gentleman. "And something with which I am not satisfied. I have been looking over these books, sir, and have read the articles on ice, glaciers, and caves, and I find no record of anything in the whole history of the world which in the least resembles the cock-and-bull story I am told about the butt-end of a glacier which tumbled into a cave in your ground, and has been lying there through all the geological ages, and the eras of formation, and periods of animate existence, down to the days of Noah, and Moses, and Methuselah, and Rameses II, and Alexander the Great, and Martin Luther, and John Wesley, to this day, for you to dig out and sell to the Williamstown Ice Company."

"But that's what happened, sir," said I.

"And besides, father," added Agnes, "the gold and silver that people take out of mines may have been in the ground as long as that ice has been."

"Bosh!" said Mr. Havelot. "The cases are not at all similar. It is simply impossible that a piece of a glacier should have fallen into a cave and been preserved in that way. The temperature of caves is always above the freezing-point, and that ice would have melted a million years before you were born."

"But, father," said Agnes, "the temperature of caves filled with ice must be very much lower than that of common caves."

"And apart from that," I added, "the ice is still there, sir."

"That doesn't make the slightest difference," he replied. "It's against all reason and common sense that such a thing could have happened. Even if there ever was a glacier in this part of the country, and if the lower portion of it did stick out over an immense hole in the ground, that protruding end would never have broken off and tumbled in. Glaciers are too thick and massive for that."

"But the glacier is there, sir," said I, "in spite of your own reasoning."

"Then again," continued the old gentleman, "if there had been a cave and a projecting spur the ice would have gradually melted and dripped into the cave, and we would have had a lake and not an ice-mine. It is a perfect absurdity."

"But it's there, notwithstanding," said I.

"And you cannot subvert facts, you know, father," added Agnes.

"Confound facts!" he cried. "I base my arguments on sober, cool-headed reason, and there's nothing that can withstand reason. The thing's impossible, and therefore it has never happened. I went over to your place, sir, when I heard of the accident, for the misfortunes of my neighbors interest me, no matter what may be my opinion of them, and when I found that you had been extricated from your ridiculous predicament, I went through your house, and I was pleased to find it in as good or better condition than I had known it in the days of your respected father. I was glad to see the improvement in your circumstances. But when I am told, sir, that your apparent prosperity rests upon such an absurdity as a glacier in a gravel-hill, I can but smile with contempt, sir."

I was getting a little tired of this. "But the glacier is there, sir," I said, "and I am taking out ice every day, and have reason to believe that I can continue to take it out for the rest of my life. With such facts as these before me, I am bound to say, sir, that I don't care in the least about reason."

"And I am here, father," said Agnes, coming close to me, "and here I want to continue for the rest of my days."

The old gentleman looked at her. "And I suppose," he said, "that you, too, don't in the least care about reason?"

"Not a bit," replied Agnes.

"Well," said Mr. Havelot, rising, "I have done all I can to make you two listen to reason, and I can do no more. I despair of making sensible human beings of you, and so you might as well go on acting like a couple of ninnyhammers."

"Can ninnyhammers marry and then settle on the property adjoining yours, sir?" I asked.

"Yes, I suppose they can," he said. "And when the aboriginal ice-house, or whatever the ridiculous thing is that they have discovered, gives out, I suppose that they can come to a reasonable man and ask him for a little money to buy bread and butter."

Two years have passed, and Agnes and the glacier are still mine. Great blocks of ice now flow in almost a continuous stream from the mine to the railroad station, and in a smaller but quite as continuous stream an income flows in upon Agnes and me; and from one of the experimental excavations made by Tom Burton on the bluff comes a stream of ice-cold water running in a sparkling brook a-down my dell. On fine mornings, before I am up, I am credibly informed that Aaron Boyce may generally be found, in season and out of season, endeavoring to catch the trout with which I am trying to stock that ice-cold stream. The diploma-case, which I caused to be carefully removed from the ice-barrier which had imprisoned me, now hangs in my study, and holds our marriage certificate.

Near the line fence which separates his property from mine, Mr. Havelot has sunk a wide shaft. "If the glacier spur under your land was a quarter of a mile wide," he says to me, "it was probably at least a half a mile long; and if that were the case, the upper end of it extends into my place, and I may be able to strike it." He has a good deal of money, this worthy Mr. Havelot, but he would be very glad to increase his riches, whether they are based upon sound reason or ridiculous facts. As for Agnes and myself, no facts or any reason could make us happier than our ardent love and our frigid fortune.

THE GREAT STONE OF SARDIS

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THE GREAT STONE OF SARDIS

CHAPTER I

THE ARRIVAL OF THE "EUTERPE-THALIA"

IT was about noon of a day in early summer that a westward-bound Atlantic liner was rapidly nearing the port of New York. Not long before, the old lighthouse on Montauk Point had been sighted, and the company on board the vessel were animated by the knowledge that in a few hours they would be at the end of their voyage.

The vessel now speeding along the southern coast of Long Island was the *Euterpe-Thalia*, from Southampton. On Wednesday morning she had left her English port, and many of her passengers were naturally anxious to be on shore in time to transact their business on the last day of the week. There were even some who expected to make their return voyage on the *Melpomene-Thalia*, which would leave New York on the next Monday.

The *Euterpe-Thalia* was one of those combination ocean vessels which had now been in use for nearly ten years, and although the present voyage was not a particularly rapid one, it had been made in a little less than three days.

As may easily be imagined, a vessel like this was a very different craft from the old steamers which used to cross the Atlantic—"ocean greyhounds," they were called—in the latter part of the nineteenth century.

It would be out of place here to give a full description of the vessels which at the period of our story, in 1947, crossed the Atlantic at an average time of three days, but an idea of their construction will suffice. Most of these vessels belonged to the class of the *Euterpe-Thalia*, and were, in fact, compound marine structures, the two portions being entirely distinct from each other. The great hull of each of these vessels contained nothing but its electric engines and its propelling machinery, with the necessary fuel and adjuncts.

The upper portion of the compound vessel consisted of decks and quarters for passengers and crew and holds for freight. These were all comprised within a vast upper hull, which rested upon the lower hull containing the motive power, the only point of contact being an enormous ball-and-socket joint. Thus, no matter how much the lower hull might roll and pitch and toss, the upper hull remained level and comparatively undisturbed.

Not only were comfort to passengers and security to movable freight gained by this arrangement of the compound vessel, but it was now possible to build the lower hull of much less size than had been the custom in the former days of steamships, when the hull had to be large enough to contain everything. As the more modern hull held nothing but the machinery, it was small in comparison with the superincumbent upper hull, and thus the force of the engine, once needed to propel a vast mass through the resisting medium of the ocean, was now employed upon a comparatively small hull, the great body of the vessel meeting with no resistance except that of the air.

It was not necessary that the two parts of these compound vessels should always be the same. The upper hulls belonging to one of the transatlantic lines were generally so constructed that they could be adjusted to any one of their lower or motive-power hulls. Each hull had a name of its own, and so the combination name of the entire vessel was frequently changed.

It was not three o'clock when the *Euterpe-Thalia* passed through the Narrows and moved slowly toward her pier on the Long Island side of the city. The quarantine officers who had accompanied the vessel on her voyage had dropped their report in the official tug which had met the vessel on her entrance into the harbor, and as the old custom-house annoyances had long since been abolished, most of the passengers were prepared for a speedy landing.

One of these passengers—a man about thirty-five—stood looking out over the stern of the vessel, instead of gazing, as were most of his companions, toward the city which they were approaching. He looked out over the harbor, under the great bridge gently spanning the distance between the western end of Long Island and the New Jersey shore,—its central pier resting where once lay the old Battery,—and so he gazed over the river, and over the houses stretching far to the west, as if his eyes could catch some signs of the country far beyond. This was Roland Clewe, the hero of our story, who had been studying and experimenting for the past year in the scientific schools and workshops of Germany. It was toward his own laboratory and his own workshops, which lay out in the country far beyond the wide line of buildings and settlements which line the western bank of the Hudson, that his heart went out and his eyes vainly strove to follow.

Skilfully steered, the *Thalia* moved slowly between high stone piers of massive construction. The *Euterpe*, or upper part of the vessel, did not pass between the piers, but over them both, and when the pier-heads projected beyond her stern the motion of the lower vessel ceased. Then the great piston which supported the socket in which the ball of the *Euterpe* moved slowly began to descend into the central portion of the *Thalia*, and as the tide was low, it was not long before each side of the upper hull rested firmly and securely upon the stone piers. Then the socket on the lower vessel descended rapidly until it was entirely clear of the ball, and the *Thalia* backed out from between the piers to take its place in a dock where it would be fitted for the voyage of the next day but one, when it would move under the *Melpomene*, resting on its piers a short distance below, and, adjusting its socket to her ball, would lift her free from the piers and carry her across the ocean.

The pier of the *Euterpe* was not far from the great Long Island and New Jersey Bridge, and Roland Clewe, when he reached the broad sidewalk which ran along the river-front, walked rapidly toward the bridge. When he came to it, he stepped into one of the elevators, which were placed at intervals along its sides from the water-front to the far-distant point where it touched the land, and, in company with a dozen other pedestrians, speedily rose to the top of the bridge, on which moved two great platforms or floors, one always keeping on its way to the east, and the other to the west. The floor of the elevator detached itself from the rest of the structure and kept company with the movable platform until all of its passengers had stepped on to the latter, when it returned with such persons as wished to descend at that point.

As Clewe took his way along the platform, walking westward with it, as if he would thus hasten his arrival at the other end of the bridge, he noticed that great improvements had been made during his year of absence. The structures on the platforms, to which people might retire in bad weather or when they wished refreshments, were more numerous and apparently better appointed than when he had seen them last, and the long rows of benches on which passengers might sit in the open air during their transit had also increased in number. Many people walked across the bridge, taking their exercise, while some who were out for the air and for the sake of the view walked in the direction opposite to that in which the platform was moving, thus lengthening the pleasant trip.

At the great elevator over the old Battery many passengers went down and many came up, but the wide platforms still moved to the east and moved to the west, never stopping or changing their rate of speed.

Roland Clewe remained on the bridge until he had reached its western end, far out on the old Jersey flats, and there he took a car of the suspended electric line, which would carry him to his home, some fifty miles in the interior. The rails of this line ran along the top of parallel timbers, some twenty feet from the ground, and below and between these rails the cars were suspended, the wheels which rested on the rails being attached near the top of the car. Thus it was impossible for the cars to run off the track, and as their bottoms or floors were ten or twelve feet from the ground, they could meet with no dangerous obstacles. In consequence of the safety of this structure, the trains were run at a very high speed.

Roland Clewe was a man who had given his life, even before he ceased to be a boy, to the investigation of physical science and its applications, and those who thought they knew him called him a great inventor; but he, who knew himself better than any one else could know him, was aware that, so far, he had not invented anything worthy the power which he felt within himself.

After the tidal wave of improvements and discoveries which had burst upon the world at the end of the nineteenth century, there had been a gradual subsidence of the waters of human progress, and year by year they sank lower and lower, until, when the twentieth century was yet young, it was a common thing to say that the human race seemed to have gone backward fifty or even a hundred years.

It had become fashionable to be unprogressive. Like old furniture in the century which had gone out, old manners, customs, and ideas had now become more attractive than those which were modern and present. Philosophers said that society was retrograding, that it was becoming satisfied with less than was its due; but society answered that it was falling back upon the things of its ancestors, which were sounder and firmer, more simple and beautiful, more worthy of the true man and woman, than all that mass of harassing improvement which had swept down upon mankind in the troubled and nervous days at the end of the nineteenth century.

On the great highways, smooth and beautiful, the stage-coach had taken the place, to a great degree, of the railroad train; the steamship, which moved most evenly and with less of the jarring and shaking consequent upon high speed, was the favored vessel with ocean travellers. It was not considered good form to read the daily papers, and only those hurried to their business who were obliged to do so in order that their employers might attend to their affairs in the leisurely manner which was then the custom of the business world.

Fast horses had become almost unknown, and with those who still used these animals a steady walker was the favorite. Bicycles had gone out as the new century came in, it being a matter of course that they should be superseded by the new electric vehicles of every sort and fashion, on which one could work the pedals if he desired exercise, or sit quietly if his inclinations were otherwise, and only the very young or the intemperate allowed themselves rapid motion on their electric wheels. It would have been considered as vulgar at that time to speed over a smooth road as it would have been thought in the nineteenth century to run along the city sidewalk.

People thought the world moved slower—at all events, they hoped it would soon do so. Even the wiser revolutionists postponed their outbreaks. Success, they believed, was fain to smile upon effort which had been well postponed.

Men came to look upon a telegram as an insult; the telephone was preferred, because it allowed one to speak slowly if he chose. Snap-shot cameras were found only in the garrets. The fifteen-minute sittings now in vogue threw upon the plate the color of the eyes, hair, and the flesh-tones of the sitter. Ladies wore hoop-skirts.

But these days of passivism at last passed by. Earnest thinkers had not believed in them; they knew they were simply reactionary, and could not last. And the century was not twenty years old when the world found itself in a storm of active effort never known in its history before. Religion, politics, literature, and art were called upon to get up and shake themselves free of the drowsiness of their years of inaction.

On that great and crowded stage where the thinkers of the world were busy in creating new parts for themselves, without much reference to what other people were doing in their parts, Roland Clewe was now ready to start again, with more earnestness and enthusiasm than before, to essay a character which, if acted as he wished to act it, would give him exceptional honor and fame, and to the world, perhaps, exceptional advantage.

CHAPTER II

THE SARDIS WORKS

At the little station of Sardis, in the hill-country of New Jersey, Roland Clewe alighted from the train, and almost instantly his hand was grasped by an elderly man, plainly and even roughly dressed, who appeared wonderfully glad to see him. Clewe also was greatly pleased at the meeting.

"Tell me, Samuel, how goes everything?" said Clewe, as they walked off. "Have you anything to say that you did not telegraph? How is your wife?"

"She's all right," was the answer. "And there's nothin' happened, except, night before last, a man tried to look into your lens-house."

"How did he do that?" exclaimed Clewe, suddenly turning upon his companion. "I am amazed! Did he use a ladder?"

Old Samuel grinned. "He couldn't do that, you know, for the flexible fence would keep him off. No, he sailed over the place in one of those air-screw machines, with a fan workin' under the car to keep it up."

"And so he soared up above my glass roof and looked down, I suppose?"

"That's what he did," said Samuel, "but he had a good deal of trouble doin' it. It was moonlight, and I watched him."

"Why didn't you fire at him?" asked Clewe, "or at least let fly one of the ammonia squirts and bring him down?"

"I wanted to see what he would do," said the old man. "The machine he had couldn't be steered, of course. He could go up well enough, but the wind took him where it wanted to. But I must give this feller the credit of sayin' that he managed his basket pretty well. He carried it a good way to the windward of the lens-house, and then sent it up, expectin' the wind to take it directly over the glass roof, but it shifted a little, and so he missed the roof, and had to try it again. He made two or three bad jobs of it, but finally managed it by hitchin' a long cord to a tree, and then the wind held him there steady enough to let him look down for a good while."

"You don't tell me that!" cried Clewe. "Did you stay there and let him look down into my lens-house?"

The old man laughed. "I let him look down," said he, "but he didn't see nothin'. I was laughin' at him all the time he was at work. He had his instruments with him, and he was turnin' down his different kinds of lights, thinkin', of course, that he could see through any kind of coverin' that we put over our machines. But, bless you! he couldn't do nothin', and I could almost hear him swear as he rubbed his eyes after he had been lookin' down for a little while."

Clewe laughed. "I see," said he. "I suppose you turned on the photo-hose."

"That's just what I did," said the old man. "Every night while you were away I had the lens-room filled with the revolving-light squirts, and when these were turned on I knew there was no gettin' any kind of rays through them. A feller may look through a roof and a wall, but he can't look through light comin' the other way, especially when it's twistin' and curlin' and spittin'."

"That's a capital idea," said Clewe. "I never thought of using the photo-hose in that way. But there are very few people in this world who would know anything about my new lens machinery even if they saw it. This fellow must have been that Pole, Rovinski. I met him in Europe, and I think he came over here not long before I did."

"That's the man, sir," said Samuel. "I turned a needle search-light on him just as he was givin' up the business, and I have got a little photograph of him at the house. His face is mostly beard, but you'll know him."

"What became of him?" asked Clewe.

"My light frightened him," he said, "and the wind took him over into the woods. I thought, as you were comin' home so soon, I wouldn't do nothin' more. You had better attend to him yourself."

"Very good," said Clewe. "I'll do that."

The home of Roland Clewe, a small house plainly furnished, but good enough for a bachelor's quarters, stood not half a mile from the station, and near it were the extensive buildings which he called his works. Here were laboratories and large machine-shops in which many men were busy at all sorts of strange contrivances in metal and other materials; and, besides other small edifices, there was a great round tower-like structure, with smooth iron walls thirty feet high and without windows, which was lighted and ventilated from the top. This was Clewe's special workshop, and, besides old Samuel Block and such workmen as were absolutely necessary and could be trusted, few people ever entered it but himself. The industries in the various buildings were diverse, some of them having no apparent relation to the others. Each of them was expected to turn out something which would revolutionize something or other in this world. But it was to his lens-house that Roland Clewe gave, in these days, his special attention. Here a great enterprise was soon to begin, more important, in his eyes, than anything else which had engaged human endeavor.

When, sometimes, in his moments of reflection, he felt obliged to consider the wonders of applied electricity, and give them their due place in comparison with the great problem he expected to solve, he had his moments of doubt. But these moments did not come frequently. The day would arrive when from his lens-house there would be promulgated a great discovery which would astonish the world.

During Roland Clewe's absence in Germany his works had been left under the general charge of Samuel Block. This old man was not a scientific person; he was not a skilled mechanic; in fact, he had been in early life a shoemaker. But when Roland Clewe, some five years before, had put up his works near the little village of Sardis, he had sent for Block, whom he had known all his life, and who was at that time the tenant of a small farm, built a cottage for him and his wife, and told him to take care of the place. From planning the grounds and superintending fences, old Sammy had begun to keep an eye upon builders and mechanics, and being a very shrewd man, he had gradually widened the sphere of his caretaking, until, at this time, he exercised a nominal supervision over all the buildings. He knew what was going on in each; he had a good idea, sometimes, of the scientific basis of this or that bit of machinery, and had gradually become acquainted with the workings and management of many of the instruments, and now and then he gave to his employer very good hints in regard to the means of attaining an end, more especially in the line of doing something by instrumentalities not intended for that purpose. If Sammy could take any machine which had been constructed to bore holes, and with it plug up orifices, he would consider that he had been of advantage to his kind.

Block was a thoroughly loyal man. The interests of his employer were always held by him first and above everything. But although the old man understood sometimes very well, and always in a fair degree, what the inventor was trying to accomplish, and appreciated the magnitude and often the amazing nature of his operations, he never believed in any of them.

Sammy was a thoroughly old-fashioned man. He had been born and had grown up in the days when a steam-locomotive was good enough and fast enough for any sensible traveller, and he greatly preferred a good pair of horses to any vehicle which one steered with a handle and regulated the speed thereof with a knob. Roland Clewe might devise all the wonderful contrivances he pleased, and he might do all sorts of astonishing things with them, but Sammy would still be of the opinion that, even if the machines did all that they were expected to do, the things they did generally would not be worth the doing.

Still, the old man would not interfere, by word or deed, with any of the plans or actions of his employer. On the contrary, he would help him in every possible way—by fidelity, by suggestion, by constant devotion and industry. But, in spite of all that, it was one of the most firmly founded principles of his life that Roland Clewe had no right to ask him to believe in the value of the wild and amazing schemes he had on hand.

Before Roland Clewe slept that night, he had visited all his workshops, factories, and laboratories. His men had been busily occupied during his absence, under the directions of their various special managers, and those in charge were of the opinion that everything had progressed as favorably and as rapidly as should have been expected. But Roland Clewe was not satisfied, even though many of his inventions and machines were much nearer completion than he had expected to find them. The work necessary to be done in his lens-house before he could go on with the great work of his life was not yet finished. As well as he could judge, it would be a month or two before he could devote himself to those labors in his lens-house the thought of which had so long filled his mind by day and even during his sleep.

CHAPTER III

MARGARET RALEIGH

AFTER breakfast the following morning, Roland Clewe mounted his horse and rode over to a handsome house which stood upon a hill about a mile and a half from Sardis. Horses, which had almost gone out of use during the first third of the century, were now getting to be somewhat in fashion again. Many people now appreciated the pleasure which these animals had given to the world since the beginning of history, and whose place, in an æsthetic sense, no inanimate machine could supply. As Roland Clewe swung himself from the saddle at the foot of a broad flight of steps, the house door was opened and a lady appeared.

"I saw you coming!" she exclaimed, running down the steps to meet him.

She was a handsome woman, inclined to be tall, and some five years younger than Clewe. This was Mrs. Margaret Raleigh, partner with Roland Clewe in the works at Sardis, and, in fact, the principal owner of that great estate. She was a widow, and her husband had been not only a man of science, but a very rich man, and when he died, at the outset of his career, his widow believed it her duty to devote his fortune to the prosecution and development of scientific works. She knew Roland Clewe as a hard student and worker, as a man of brilliant and original ideas, and as the originator of schemes which, if carried out successfully, would place him among the great inventors of the world.

She was not a scientific woman in the strict sense of the word, but she had a most thorough and appreciative sympathy with all forms of physical research, and there was a distinctiveness and grandeur in the aims toward which Roland Clewe had directed his life-work which determined her to unite, with all the power of her money and her personal encouragement, in the labors he had set for himself.

Therefore it was that the main part of the fortune left by Herbert Raleigh had been invested in the shops and foundries at Sardis, and that Roland Clewe and Margaret Raleigh were partners and co-owners in the business and the plant of the establishment.

"I am glad to welcome you back," said she, her hand in his. "But it strikes me as odd to see you come upon a horse. I should have supposed that by this time you would arrive sliding over the tree-tops on a pair of aërial skates."

"No," said he. "I may invent that sort of thing, but I prefer to use a horse. Don't you remember my mare? I rode her before I went away. I left her in old Sammy's charge, and he has been riding her every day."

"And glad enough to do it, I am sure," said she, "for I have heard him say that the things he hates most in this world are dead legs. 'When I can't use mine,' he said, 'let me have some others that are alive.' This is such a pretty creature," she added, as Clewe was looking about for some place to which he might tie his animal, "that I have a great mind to learn to ride myself!"

"A woman on a horse would be a queer sight," said he; and with this they went into the house.

The conference that morning in Mrs. Raleigh's library was a long and somewhat anxious one. For several years the money of the Raleigh estate had been freely and generously expended upon the enterprises in hand at the Sardis Works, but so far nothing of important profit had resulted from the operations. Many things had been carried on satisfactorily and successfully to various stages, but nothing had been finished, and now the two partners had to admit that the work which Clewe had expected to begin immediately upon his return from Europe must be postponed. Still, there was no sign of discouragement in the voices or the faces—it may be said, in the souls—of the man and woman who sat there talking across a table. He was as full of hope as ever he was, and she as full of faith.

They were an interesting couple to look upon. He, dark, a little hollow in the cheeks, a slight line or two of anxiety in the forehead, a handsome, well-cut mouth, without beard, and a frame somewhat spare but strong, a man of graceful but unaffected action, dressed in a riding-coat, breeches, and leather leggings. She, her cheeks colored with earnest purpose, her gray eyes rather larger than usual as she looked up from the paper where she had been calculating, was dressed in the simple, artistic fashion of the day. The falling folds of the semi-clinging fabrics accommodated themselves well to a figure which even at that moment of rest suggested latent energy and activity.

"If we have to wait for the Artesian ray," she said, "we must try to carry out something else. People are watching us, talking of us, expecting something of us. We must give them something. Now the question is, what shall that be?"

"The way I look at it is this," said her companion. "For a long time you have been watching and waiting and expecting something, and it is time that I should give you something. Now the question is—"

"Not at all," said she, interrupting. "You arrogate too much to yourself. I don't expect you to give anything to me. We are working together, and it is both of us who must give this poor old world something to satisfy it for a while, until we can disclose to it that grand discovery, grander than anything that it has ever even imagined. I want to go on talking about it, but I shall not do it. We must keep our minds tied down to some present purpose. Now, Mr. Clewe, what is there that we can take up and carry on immediately? Can it be the great shell?"

Clewe shook his head.

"No," said he. "That is progressing admirably, but many things are necessary before we can experiment with it."

"Since you were away," said she, "I have often been down to the works to look at it, but everything about it seems to go so slowly. However, I suppose it will go fast enough when it is finished."

"Yes," said he. "I hope it will go fast enough to overturn the artillery of the world. But, as you say, don't let us talk about the things for which we must wait. I will carefully consider everything that is in operation, and to-morrow I will suggest something with which we can go on."

"After all," said she, as they stood together before parting, "I cannot take my mind from the Artesian ray."

"Nor can I," he answered, "but for the present we must put our hands to work at something else."

THE Artesian ray of which these two spoke was an invention upon which Roland Clewe had been experimenting for a long time, and which had been the object of his labors and studies while in Europe. In the first decade of the century it had been generally supposed that the X ray, or cathode ray, had been developed and applied to the utmost extent of its capability. It was used in surgery and in mechanical arts, and in many varieties of scientific operations, but no considerable advance in its line of application had been recognized for a quarter of a century.

But Roland Clewe had come to believe in the existence of a photic force somewhat similar to the cathode ray, but of infinitely greater significance and importance to the searcher after physical truth. Simply described, his discovery was a powerful ray produced by a new combination of electric lights, which would penetrate down into the earth, passing through all substances which it met in its way, and illuminating and disclosing everything through which it passed.

All matter likely to be found beneath the surface of the earth in that part of the country had been experimented upon by Clewe, and nothing had resisted the penetrating and illuminating influence of his ray—

well called Artesian ray, for it was intended to bore into the bowels of the earth. After making many minor trials of the force and powers of his light, Roland Clewe had undertaken the construction of a massive apparatus by which he believed a ray could be generated which, little by little, perhaps foot by foot, would penetrate into the earth and light up everything between the farthest point it had attained and the lenses of his machine. That is to say, he hoped to produce a long hole of light, about three feet in diameter and as deep as it was possible to make it descend, in which he could see all the various strata and deposits of which the earth is composed. How far he could send down this piercing cylinder of light he did not allow himself to consider. With a small and imperfect machine he had seen several feet into the ground. With a great and powerful apparatus such as he was now constructing, why should he not look down below the deepest point to which man's knowledge had ever reached—down so far that he must follow his descending light with a telescope, down, down until he had discovered the hidden secrets of the earth?

The peculiar quality of this light, which gave it its great preëminence over all other penetrating rays, was the power it possessed of illuminating an object, passing through it, rendering it transparent and invisible, illuminating the opaque substance it next met in its path, and afterwards rendering that transparent. If the rocks and earth in the cylindrical cavities of light which Clewe had already produced in his experiments had actually been removed with pickaxes and shovels, the lighted hole a few feet in depth could not have appeared more real, the bottom and sides of the little well could not have been revealed more sharply and distinctly; and yet, there was no hole in the ground, and if one should try to put his foot into the lighted perforation, he would find it as solid as any other part of the earth.

CHAPTER IV

THE MISSION OF SAMUEL BLOCK

NOT far from the works at Sardis there was a large pond, which was formed by the damming of a stream which at this point ran between high hills. In order to obtain a sufficient depth of water for his marine experiments, Roland Clewe had built an unusually high and strong dam, and this body of water, which was called a lake, widened out considerably behind the dam and stretched back for more than half a mile.

He was standing on the shore of this lake, early the next morning, in company with several workmen, examining a curious-looking vessel which was moored near by, when Margaret Raleigh came walking toward him. When he saw her he left the men and went to meet her.

"You could not wait until I came to your house to tell you what I was going to do?" he said, smiling.

"No," she answered, "I could not. The Artesian ray kept me awake nearly all night, and I felt that I must quiet my mind as soon as I could by giving it something real and tangible to take hold of. Now what is it that you are going to do? Anything in the ship line?"

"Yes," said he, "it is something in that line. But let us walk back a little; I am not quite ready to tell the men everything. I have been thinking," he said, as they moved together from the lake, "of that practical enterprise which we must take up and finish, in order to justify ourselves to the public and to those who have in various ways backed up our enterprises, and I have concluded that the best thing I can do is to carry out my plan of going to the north pole."

"What!" she exclaimed. "You are not going to try to do that—you yourself?" And as she spoke her voice trembled a little.

"Yes," said he, "I thought I would go myself, or else send Sammy."

She laughed.

"Ridiculous!" said she. "Send Sammy Block! You are joking?"

"No," said he, "I am not. I have been planning the expedition, and I think Sammy would be an excellent man to take charge of it. I might go part of the way,—at least, far enough to start him,—and I could so arrange matters that Sammy would have no difficulty in finishing the expedition, but I do not think that I could give up all the time that such an enterprise deserves. It is not enough merely to find the pole: one should stay there and make observations which would be of service."

"But if Sammy finishes the journey himself," she said, "his will be the glory."

"Let him have it," replied Clewe. "If my method of arctic exploration solves the great problem of the pole, I shall be satisfied with the glory I get from the conception. The mere journey to the northern end of the earth's axis is of slight importance. I shall be glad to have Sammy go first, and have as many follow him as may choose to travel in that direction."

"Yet it is a great achievement," said she. "I would give much to be the first human being who has placed his foot upon the north pole."

"You would get it wet, I am afraid," said Clewe, smiling. "But that is not the kind of glory I crave. If I can help a man to go there, I shall be very willing to do so, provided he will make me a favorable report of his discoveries."

"Tell me all about it," she said. "When will you start? How many will go?"

"There is some work to be done on that boat," said he. "Let me set the men at it, and then we will go into the office, and I will lay everything before you."

When they were seated in a quiet little room attached to one of the large buildings, Roland Clewe made ready to describe his proposed arctic expedition to his partner, into whose mind the wonderful enterprise had entered, driving out the disturbing thoughts of the Artesian ray.

"You have told me about it before," said she, "but I am not quite sure that I have it all straight in my mind. You will go, I suppose, in a submarine boat—that is, whoever goes will go in it?"

"Yes," said he, "for part of the way. My plan is to proceed in an ordinary vessel as far north as Cape Tariff, taking the *Dipsey*, my submarine boat, in tow. The exploring party, with the necessary stores and instruments, will embark on the *Dipsey*, but before they start they will make a telegraphic connection with the station at Cape Tariff. The *Dipsey* will carry one of those light, portable cables, which will be wound on a drum in her hold, and this will be paid out as she proceeds on her way. Thus, you see, by means of the cable from Cape Tariff to St. John's, we can be in continual communication with Sammy, no matter where he may go; for there is no reason to suppose that the ocean in those Northern regions is too deep to allow the successful placing of a telegraphic cable.

"My plan is a very simple one, but as we have not talked it over for some time, I will describe it in full. All explorers who have tried to get to the north pole have met with the same bad fortune. They could not pass over the vast and awful regions of ice which lay between them and the distant point at which they aimed. The deadly ice-land was always too much for them. They died or they turned back.

"When flying-machines were brought to supposed perfection, some twenty years ago, it was believed that the pole would easily be reached, but there were always the wild and wicked winds, in which no steering apparatus could be relied upon. We may steer and manage our vessels in the fiercest storms at sea, but when the ocean moves in one great tidal wave our rudders are of no avail. Everything rushes on together, and our strongest ships are cast high up on the land.

"So it happened to the Canadian Bagne, who went in 1927 in the best flying-ship ever made, and which it was supposed could be steadily kept upon its way without regard to the influence of the strongest winds. But a great hurricane came down from the north, as if square miles of atmosphere were driving onward in a steady mass, and hurled him and his ship against an iceberg, and nothing of his vessel but pieces of wood and iron, which the bears could not eat, was ever seen again. This was the last polar expedition of that sort, or any sort. But my plan is so easy of accomplishment,—at least, so it seems to me,—and so devoid of risk and danger, that it amazes me that it has never been tried before. In fact, if I had not thought that it would be such a comparatively easy thing to go to the pole, I believe I should have been there long ago. But I have always considered that it could be done at some season when more difficult and engrossing projects were not pressing upon me.

"What I propose to do is to sink down below the bottom of the ice in the arctic regions, and then to proceed in a direct line northward to the pole. The distance between the lower portions of the ice and the bottom of the Arctic Ocean I believe to be quite sufficient to allow me all the room needed for navigation. I do not think it necessary even to consider the contingency of the greatest iceberg or floe reaching the bottom of the arctic waters. Consequently, without trouble or danger, the *Dipsey* can make a straight course for the extreme north.

"By means of the instruments the *Dipsey* will carry, it will be comparatively easy to determine the position of the pole, and before this point is reached I believe she will find herself in an open sea, where she may rise to the surface. But if this should not be the case, a comparatively thin place in the ice will be chosen, and a great opening blown through it by means of an ascensional shell, several of which she will carry. She will then rise to the surface of the water in this opening, and the necessary operations will be carried on."

"Mr. Clewe," said Margaret Raleigh, "the thing is so terrible I cannot bear to think of it. The *Dipsey* may have to sail hundreds and hundreds of miles under the ice, shut in as if an awful lid were put over her. No matter what happened down there, she could not come up and get out. It would be the same thing as having a vast sky of ice stretched out above one. I should think the very idea of it would make people shudder and die."

"Oh, it is not so bad as all that," answered Clewe. "There is nothing so dear to the marine explorer as plenty of water and plenty of room to sail in, and under the ice the *Dipsey* will find all that."

"But there are so many dangers," said she, "that you cannot provide against in advance."

"That is very true," said he, "but I have thought so much about them, and I have studied and consulted so much about them, that I think I have provided against all the dangers we have reason to expect. To me the whole business seems like very plain, straightforward sailing."

"It may seem so here," said Margaret Raleigh, "but it will be quite another thing out under the arctic ice."

Preparations for the expedition were pushed forward as rapidly as possible, and Clewe would have been delighted to make this voyage into the unseen regions of the nether ice, but he knew that it was his duty not to lose time or to risk his life when he was on the brink of a discovery far more wonderful, far more important to the world, than the finding of the pole. Therefore, he determined that he would go with the expedition no farther than the point where the ice would prevent the farther progress of the vessel in which they would sail from New York.

It was not to be supposed that Roland Clewe intended to intrust such an expedition to the absolute command of such a man as old Samuel Block. There would be on board the *Dipsey* an electrician who had long been preparing himself for this expedition; there were to be other scientific men; there would be a submarine engineer, and such minor officers and assistants as would be necessary. But Clewe wanted some one who would represent him, who could be trusted to act in his place in case of success or of failure, who could be thoroughly depended upon should a serious emergency arise. Such a man was Samuel Block, and, somewhat strange to say, old Sammy was perfectly willing to go to the pole. He was always ready for anything within bounds of his duty, and those bounds included everything which Mr. Clewe wished done.

Sammy was an old-fashioned man, and therefore, in talking over arrangements with Roland Clewe, he insisted upon having a sailor in the party.

"In old times," said he, "when I was a young man, nobody ever thought of settin' out on any kind of sea voyagin' without havin' a sailor along. The fact is, they used to be pretty much all sailors."

"But in this expedition," said Clewe, "a sailor would be out of place. One of your old-fashioned mariners would not know what to do under the water. Submarine voyaging is an entirely different profession from that of the old-time navigator."

"I know all that," said Sammy. "I know how everything is a machine nowadays. But I shall never forget what a glorious thing it was to sail on the sea, with the wind blowin' and the water curlin' beneath your keel. I lived on the coast, and used to go out whenever I had a chance. But things is mightily changed nowadays. Just think of that yacht race in England the other day—a race between two electric yachts, with a couple of vessels ploughin' along to windward, carryin' between 'em a board fence thirty feet high to keep the wind off the yachts and give 'em both smooth water and equal chance. I can't get used to that sort of thing, and I tell you, sir, that if I am goin' on a voyage to the pole, I want to have a sailor along. If everything goes all right, we must come to the top of the water some time, and then we ought to have at least one man who understands surface navigation."

"All right," said Clewe. "Get your sailor."

"I've got my eye on him. He's a Cape Cod man, and he's not so very old, either. When he was a boy people went about in ships with sails, and even after he grew up Cap'n Jim was a great feller to manage a cat-boat; for things has moved slower on the cape than in many parts of the country."

So Captain Jim Hubbell was engaged as sailor to the expedition; and when he came on to Sardis and looked over the *Dipsey*, he expressed a general opinion of her construction and capabilities which indicated a disposition on his part to send her, and all others fashioned after her plan, to depths a great deal lower than ever had been contemplated by their inventors. Still, as he wanted very much to go to the pole if it was possible that he could get there, and as the wages offered him were exceedingly liberal, Captain Jim enlisted in the party. His duties were to begin when the *Dipsey* floated on the surface of the sea like a common-sense craft.

A day or two before the expedition was ready to start, Roland Clewe was very much surprised, one morning, by a visit from Sammy's wife, Mrs. Sarah Block, who lost no time in informing him that she had made up her mind to accompany her husband on the perilous voyage he was about to make.

"You!" said Clewe. "You could not go on such an expedition as that!"

"If Sammy goes, I go," said Mrs. Block. "If it is dangerous for me, it is dangerous for him. I have been tryin' to get sense enough into his head to make him stay at home, but I can't do it, so I have made up my mind that I go with him or he don't go. We have travelled together on top of the land, and we have travelled together on top of the water, and if there's to be travellin' under the water, why, then, we travel together all the same. If Sammy goes polin', I go polin'. I think he's a fool to do it, but if he's goin' to be a fool, I am goin' to be a fool. And as for my bein' in the way, you needn't think of that, Mr. Clewe. I can cook for the livin', I can take care of the sick, and I can sew up the dead in shrouds."

"All right, Mrs. Block," said Clewe. "If you insist on it, and Sammy is willing, you may go. But I will beg of you not to say anything about the third class of good offices which you propose to perform for the party, for it might cast a gloom over some of the weaker-minded."

"Cast a gloom!" said Mrs. Block. "If all I hear is true, there will be a general gloom over everything, that will be like havin' a black pocket-handkercher tied over your head, and I don't know that anything I could say would make that gloom more gloomier."

When Margaret Raleigh parted with Clewe on the deck of the *Go Lightly*, the large electric vessel which was to tow the *Dipsey* up to the limits of navigable Northern waters, she knew he must make a long journey,—nearly twice as far as the voyage to England,—before she could hear from him; but when he arrived at Cape Tariff, a point far up on the northwestern coast of Greenland, she would hear from him, for from this point there was telegraphic communication with the rest of the world. There was a little station there, established by some commercial companies, and their agent was a telegraph operator.

The passage from New York to Cape Tariff was an uneventful one, and when Clewe disembarked at the lonely Greenland station he was greeted by a long message from Mrs. Raleigh, the principal import of which was that on no account must he allow himself to be persuaded to go on the submarine voyage of the *Dipsey*. On his part, Clewe had no desire to make any change in his plans. During all the long voyage northward his heart had been at Sardis.

The *Dipsey* was a comparatively small vessel, but it afforded comfortable accommodations for a dozen or more people, and there was room for all the stores which would be needed for a year. She was furnished, besides, with books and every useful and convenient contrivance which had been thought desirable for her peculiar expedition.

When everything was ready, Roland Clewe took leave of the officers, the crew, and the passenger on board the *Dipsey*, and the last-mentioned, as she shook hands with him, shed tears.

"It seems to me like a sort of a congregational suicide, Mr. Clewe," said she. "And it can't even be said that all the members are doin' it of their own accord, for I am not. If Sammy did not go, I would not, but if he does, I do, and there's the end of that. And I suppose it won't be very much longer before there's the end of all of us. I hope you will tell Mrs. Raleigh that I sent my best love to her with my last words; for even if I was to see her again, it would seem to me like beginning all over again, and this would be the end of this part of my life all the same. What I hope and pray for is that none of the party may die of any kind of a disease before the rest all go to their end together; for remains on board an under-water vessel is somethin' which mighty few nerves would be able to stand."

When all farewells had been said, Mr. Clewe went on board the *Go Lightly*, on the deck of which were her officers and men and the few inhabitants of the station, and then the plate-glass hatchways of the *Dipsey* were tightly closed, and she began to sink until she entirely disappeared below the surface of the water, leaving above her a little floating glass globe, connected with her by an electric wire.

As the *Dipsey* went under the sea, this little globe followed her on the surface, and the *Go Lightly* immediately began to move after her. This arrangement had been made, as Clewe wished to follow the *Dipsey* for a time, in order to see if everything was working properly with her. She kept on a straight course, flashing a light into the little globe every now and then, and finally, after meeting some floating ice, she shattered the globe with an explosion, which was the signal agreed upon to show that all was well, and that the *Dipsey* had started off alone on the submarine voyage to the pole.

Roland Clewe gazed out over the wide stretch of dark-green waves and glistening crests, where nothing could be seen which indicated life except a distant, wearily flapping sea-bird, and then, turning his back upon the pole, he made preparations for his return voyage to New York, at which port he might expect to receive direct news from Sammy Block and his companions.

CHAPTER V

UNDER WATER

When the *Dipsey*, the little submarine vessel which had started to make its way to the north pole under the ice of the arctic regions, had sunk out of sight under the waters, it carried a very quiet and earnestly observant party. Every one seemed anxious to know what would happen next, and all those whose duties would allow them to do so gathered under the great skylight in the upper deck, and gazed upward at the little glass bulb on the surface of the water, which they were towing by means of an electric wire; and every time a light was flashed into this bulb, it seemed to them as if they were for an instant reunited to that vast open world outside of the ocean. When at last the glass globe was exploded, as a signal that the *Dipsey* had cut loose from all ties which connected her with the outer world, they saw through the water above them the flash and the sparks, and then all was darkness.

The interior of the submarine vessel was brightly lighted by electric lamps, and the souls of the people inside of her soon began to brighten under the influence of their work and the interest they took in their novel undertaking. There was, however, one exception—the soul of Mrs. Block did not brighten.

Mrs. Sarah Block was a peculiar person. She was her husband's second wife, and was about forty years of age. Her family were country people, farmers, and her life as a child was passed among old-fashioned folk, many of whom had lived in the past century, and had brought their old-fashioned ideas with them into this. But Sarah did not wish to be old-fashioned. She sympathized with the social movements of the day; she believed in inventions and progress; she went to school and studied a great deal which her parents never heard of, and which she very promptly forgot. When she grew up she wore the widest hoop-skirts; she was one of the first to use an electric spinning-wheel; and when she took charge of her father's house, she it was who banished to the garret the old-fashioned sewing-machine, and the bicycles on which some of the older members of the family once used to ride. She tried to persuade her father to use a hot-air plough, and to give up the practice of keeping cows in an age when milk and butter were considered not only unnecessary, but injurious to human health. When she married Samuel Block, then a man of forty-five, she really thought she did so because he was a person of progressive ideas, but the truth was, she married him because he loved her, and because he did it in an honest, old-fashioned way.

In her inner soul Sarah was just as old-fashioned as anybody—she had been born so, and she had never changed. Endeavor as she might to make herself believe that she was a woman of modern thought and feeling, her soul was truly in sympathy with the social fashions and customs in which she had been brought up, and those to which she was trying to educate herself were on the outside of her, never a part of her, but always the objects of her aspirations. These aspirations she believed to be principles. She tried to set her mind upon the unfolding revelations of the era, as young women in her grandfather's day used to try to set their minds upon Browning. When Sarah told Mr. Clewe that she was going on the *Dipsey* because she would not let her husband go by himself, she did so because she was ashamed to say that she was in such sympathy with the great scientific movements of the day that she thought it was her duty to associate herself with one of them ; but while she thought she was lying in the line of high principle, she was in fact expressing the truthful affection of her old-fashioned nature—a nature she was always endeavoring to keep out of sight, but which from its dark corner ruled her life.

She had an old-fashioned temper, which delighted in censoriousness. The more interest she took in anything, the more alive was she to its defects. She tried to be a good member of her church, but she said sharp things of the congregation.

No electrical illumination could brighten the soul of Mrs. Block. She moved about the little vessel with a clouded countenance. She was impressed with the feeling that something was wrong, even now at the beginning, although, of course, she could not be expected to know what it was.

At the bows, and in various places at the sides of the vessel, and even in the bottom, were large plates of heavy glass, through which the inmates could look out into the water, and there streamed forward into the quiet depths of the ocean a great path of light, proceeding from a powerful search-light in the bow. By this light any object in the water could be seen some time before reaching it; but to guard more thoroughly against the most dreaded obstacle they feared to meet—down-reaching masses of ice—a hydraulic thermometer, mounted on a little submarine vessel connected with the *Dipsey* by wires, preceded her a long distance ahead. Impelled and guided by the batteries of the larger vessel, this little thermometer-boat would send back instant tidings of any changes in temperature in the water occasioned by the proximity of ice. To prevent sinking too deep, a heavy lead, on which were several electric buttons, hung far below the *Dipsey*, ready at all times, day or night, to give notice if she came too near the reefs and sands of the bottom of the Arctic Ocean.

The steward had just announced that the first meal on board the *Dipsey* was ready for the officers' mess, when Mrs. Block suddenly rushed into the cabin.

"Look here, Sammy," she exclaimed, "I want you, or somebody who knows more than you do, to tell me how the people on this vessel are goin' to get air to breathe with. It has just struck me that when we have breathed up all the air that's inside, we will simply suffocate, just as if we were drowned outside a boat instead of inside; and, for my part, I can't see any difference, except in one case we keep dry and in the other we are wet."

"More than that, madam," said Mr. Gibbs, the master electrician, who, in fact, occupied the rank of first officer of the vessel, "if we are drowned outside in the open water we shall be food for fishes, whereas if we suffocate inside the vessel we shall only be food for reflection, if anybody ever finds us."

"You did not come out expectin' that, I hope?" said Mrs. Block. "I thought something would happen when we started, but I never supposed we would run short of air."

"Don't bother yourself about that, Sarah," said Sammy. "We'll have all the air we want. Of course we would not start without thinkin' of that."

"I don't know," said Sarah. "It's very seldom that men start off anywhere without forgettin' somethin'."

"Let us take our seats, Mrs. Block," said Mr. Gibbs, "and I will set your mind at rest on the air point. There are a great many machines and mechanical arrangements on board here which, of course, you don't understand, but which I shall take great pleasure in explaining to you whenever you want to learn something about them. Among them are two great metal contrivances, outside the *Dipsey* and near her bows, which open into the water, and also communicate with the inside of her hull. These are called electric gills, and they separate air from the water around us in a manner somewhat resembling the way in which a fish's gills act. They continually send in air enough to supply us not only with all we need for breathing, but with enough to raise us to the surface of the water whenever we choose to produce it in sufficient quantities."

"I am glad to hear it," said Mrs. Block, "and I hope the machines will never get out of order. But I should think that sort of air, made fresh from the water, would be very damp. It's very different from the air we are used to, which is warmed by the sun and properly aired."

"Aired air seems funny to me," remarked Sammy.

There was fascination, not at all surprising, about the great glass lights in the *Dipsey*, and whenever a man was off duty he was pretty sure to be at one of these windows, if he could get there. At first Mrs. Block was afraid to look out of any of them. It made her blood creep, she said, to stare out into all that solemn water. For the first two days, when she could get no one to talk to her, she passed most of her time sitting in the cabin, holding in one of her hands a dust-brush, and in the other a farmer's almanac. She did not use the brush, nor did she read the almanac, but they reminded her of home and the world which was real.

But when she did make up her mind to look out of the windows, she became greatly interested, especially at the bow, where she could gaze out into the water illuminated by the long lane of light thrown out by the search-light. Here she continually imagined she saw things, and sometimes greatly startled the men on lookout by her exclamations. Once she thought she saw a floating corpse, but, fortunately, it was Sammy who was by her when she proclaimed her discovery, and he did not believe in any such nonsense, suggesting that it might have been some sort of a fish. After that the idea of fish filled the mind of Mrs. Block, and she set herself to work to search in an encyclopædia which was on board for descriptions of fishes which inhabited the depths of the arctic seas. To meet a whale, she thought, would be very bad; but then, a whale is clumsy and soft; a swordfish was what she most dreaded. A swordfish running his sword through one of the glass windows, and perhaps coming in himself, along with the water, sent a chill down her back every time she thought about it and talked about it.

"You needn't be afraid of swordfishes," said Captain Jim Hubbell. "They don't fancy the cold water we are sailin' in. And as to whales, don't you know, madam, there ain't no more of 'em?"

"No more whales!" exclaimed Sarah. "I have heard about 'em all my life!"

"Oh, you can read and hear about 'em, easy enough," replied Captain Jim, "but you nor nobody else will ever see none of 'em ag'in—at least, in this part of the world. Sperm-whales began gittin' scarce when I was a boy, and pretty soon there was nothin' left but bow-head or right whales, that tried to keep out of the way of human bein's by livin' far up North. But when they came to shootin' 'em with cannons which would carry three or four miles, the whale's day was up, and he got scarcer and scarcer, until he faded out altogether. There was a British vessel, the *Barkright*, that killed two bow-head whales in 1935, north of Melville Island, but since that time there hasn't been a whale seen in all the arctic waters. I have heard that said by sailors, and I have read about it. They have all been killed, and nothin' left of 'em but the skeletons that's in the museums."

Mrs. Block shuddered. "It would be terrible to meet a livin' one, and yet it is an awful thought to think that they are all dead and gone," said she.

CHAPTER VI

VOICES FROM THE POLAR SEAS

ALTHOUGH Sammy Block and his companions were not only far up among the mysteries of the region of everlasting ice, and were sunk out of sight, so that their vessel had become one of those mysteries, it was still perfectly possible for them to communicate, by means of the telegraphic wire which was continually unrolling astern, with people all over the world. But this communication was a matter which required great judgment and caution, and it had been a subject of very careful consideration by Roland Clewe.

When he had returned to Cape Tariff, after parting with the *Dipsey*, he had received several messages from Sammy, which assured him that the submarine voyage was proceeding satisfactorily. But when he went on board the *Go Lightly* and started homeward, he would be able to hear nothing more from the submarine voyagers until he reached St. John's, Newfoundland—the first place at which his vessel would touch. Of course, constant communication with Sardis would be kept up, but this communication might be the source of great danger to the plans of Roland Clewe. Whatever messages of importance came from the depths of the arctic regions he wished to come only to him or to Mrs. Raleigh. He had contrived a telegraphic cipher, known only to Mrs. Raleigh, Sammy, and two officers of the *Dipsey*, and, to insure secrecy, Sammy had been strictly enjoined to send no information in any other way than in this cipher.

For years there had been men, both in America and in Europe, who had been watching with jealous scrutiny the inventions and researches of Roland Clewe, and he well understood that if they should discover his processes and plans before they were brought to successful completion, he must expect to be robbed of many of the results of his labors. The first news that came to him, on his recent return to America, had been the tale told by Sammy Block, of the man in the air who had been endeavoring to peer down into his lens-house, and he had heard of other attempts of this kind. Therefore it was that the telegraphic instrument on the *Dipsey* had been given into the sole charge of Samuel Block, who had become a very capable operator, and who could be relied upon to send no news over his wire which could give serviceable information to the operators along the line from Cape Tariff to Sardis, New Jersey.

But Clewe did not in the least desire that Margaret Raleigh should be kept waiting until he came back from the arctic regions for news from the expedition which she as well as himself had sent out into the unknown North. Consequently Samuel Block had been told that he might communicate with Mrs. Raleigh as soon and as often as he pleased, remembering always to be careful never to send any word which might reveal anything to the detriment of his employers. When a message should be received on board the *Dipsey* that Mr. Clewe was ready to communicate with her, frequent reports were expected from the master electrician, but it would be Sammy who would unlock the cover which had been placed over the instrument.

Before he retired to his bunk on the first night on board the *Dipsey*, Sammy thought it proper to send a message to Mrs. Raleigh. He had not telegraphed before, because he knew that Mr. Clewe would communicate fully before he left Cape Tariff.

Margaret Raleigh had gone to bed late, and had been lying for an hour or two unable to sleep, so busy was her mind with the wonderful things which were happening in the far-away polar regions—strange and awful things—in which she had such a direct and lively interest. She had heard, from Roland Clewe, of the successful beginning of the *Dipsey's* voyage, and before she had gone to her chamber she had received a last message from him on leaving Cape Tariff; and now, as she lay there in her bed, her whole soul was occupied with thoughts of that little party of people —some of them so well known to her—all of them sent out upon this perilous and frightful expedition by her consent and assistance, and now left alone to work their way through the dread and silent waters that underlie the awful ice regions of the pole. She felt that so long as she had a mind she could not help thinking of them, and so long as she thought of them she could not sleep.

Suddenly there was a ring at the door, which made her start and spring from her bed, and shortly a telegraphic message was brought to her by a maid. It was from the depths of the Arctic Ocean, and read as follows:

"Getting on very well. No motion. Not cold. Slight rheumatism in Sarah's shoulder. Wants to know which side of plasters you gave her goes next skin.

"SAMUEL BLOCK."

An hour afterwards there flashed farther northward than ever current from a battery had gone before an earnest, cordial, almost affectionate message from Margaret Raleigh to Sarah Block, and it concluded with the information that it was the rough side of the plasters which should go next to the skin. After that Mrs. Raleigh went to bed with a peaceful mind and slept soundly.

Frequent communications, always of a friendly or domestic nature, passed between the polar sea and Sardis during the next few days. Mrs. Raleigh would have telegraphed a good deal more than she did had it not been for the great expense from Sardis to Cape Tariff, and Sarah Block was held in restraint, not by pecuniary considerations, but by Sammy's sense of the fitness of things. He nearly always edited her messages, even when he consented to send them. One communication he positively refused to transmit. She came to him in a great flurry.

"Sammy," said she, "I have just found out something, and I can't rest until I have told Mrs. Raleigh. I won't mention it here, because it might frighten some people into fits and spasms. Sammy, do you know there are thirteen people on board this boat?"

"Sarah Block!" ejaculated her husband, "what in the name of common sense are you talkin' about?

What earthly difference can it make whether there are thirteen people on this vessel or twelve? And if it did make any difference, what are you goin' to do about it? Do you expect anybody to get out?"

"Of course I don't," replied Sarah, "although there are some of them that would not have come in if I had had my say about it. But as Mrs. Raleigh is one of the owners, and such a good friend to you and me, Sammy, it is our duty to let her know what dreadful bad luck we are carryin' with us."

"Don't you suppose she knows how many people are aboard?" said Sammy.

"Of course she knows, but she don't consider what it means, or we wouldn't all have been here. It is her right to know, Sammy. Perhaps she might order us to go back to Cape Tariff and put somebody ashore."

In his heart Samuel Block believed that if this course were adopted he was pretty sure who would be put on shore if a vote were taken by officers and crew, but he was too wise to say anything upon this point, and contented himself with positively refusing to send southward any news of the evil omen.

The next day Mrs. Block felt that she must speak upon the subject or perish, and she asked Mr. Gibbs what he thought of there being thirteen people on board.

"Madam," said he, "these signs lose all their powers above the seventieth parallel of latitude. In fact, none of them have ever been known to come true above sixty-eight degrees and forty minutes, and we are a good deal higher than that, you know."

Sarah made no answer, but she told her husband afterwards that she thought that Mr. Gibbs had his mind so full of electricity that it had no room for old-fashioned common sense. It did not do to sneer at signs and portents. Among the earliest things she remembered was a story which had been told her of her grandmother's brother, who was the thirteenth passenger in an omnibus when he was a young man, and who died that very night, having slipped off the back step, where he was obliged to stand, and fractured his skull.

At last there came a day when a message in cipher from Roland Clewe delivered itself on board the *Dipsey*, and from that moment a hitherto unknown sense of security seemed to pervade the minds of officers and crew. To be sure, there was no good reason for this, for if disaster should overtake them, or even threaten them, there was no submarine boat ready to send to their rescue, and, if there had been, it would be long, long before such aid could reach them ; but still, they were comforted, encouraged, and cheered. Now, if anything happened, they could send news of it to the man in whom they all trusted, and through him to their homes, and whatever their far-away friends had to say to them could be said without reserve.

There was nothing yet of definite scientific importance to report, but the messages of the master electrician were frequent and long, regardless of expense, and, so far as her husband would permit her, Sarah Block informed Mrs. Raleigh of the discouragements and dangers which awaited this expedition. It must be said, however, that Mrs. Block never proposed to send back one word which should indicate that she was in favor of the abandonment of the expedition, or of her retirement from it should opportunity allow. She had set out for the north pole because Sammy was going there, and the longer she went "polin'" with him, the stronger became her curiosity to see the pole and to know what it looked like.

The *Dipsey* was not expected to be, under any circumstances, a swift vessel, and now, retarded by her outside attachments, she moved but slowly under the waters. The telegraphic wire which she laid as she proceeded was the thinnest and lightest submarine cable ever manufactured, but the mass of it was of great weight, and as it found its way to the bottom it much retarded the progress of the vessel, which moved more slowly than was absolutely necessary, for fear of breaking this connection with the living world.

Onward, but a few knots an hour, the *Dipsey* moved like a fish in the midst of the sea. The projectors of the enterprise had a firm belief that there was a channel from Baffin Bay into an open polar sea which would be navigable if its entrance were not blocked up by ice, and on this belief were based all their hopes of success. So the explorers pressed steadily onward, always with an anxious lookout above them for fear of striking the overhanging ice, always with an anxious lookout below for fear of dangers which might loom up from the bottom, always with an anxious lookout starboard for fear of running against the foundations of Greenland, always with an anxious lookout to port for fear of striking the groundwork of the unknown land to the west, and always keeping a lookout in every direction for whatever revelation these unknown waters might choose to make to them.

Captain Jim Hubbell had no sympathy with the methods of navigation practised on board the *Dipsey*. So long as he could not go out on deck and take his noon observations, he did not believe it would be possible for him to know exactly where his vessel was. But he accepted the situation, and objected to none of the methods of the scientific navigators.

"It's a mighty simple way of sailin'," he said to Sammy. "As long as there's water to sail in, you have just got to git on a line of longitude—it doesn't matter what line, so long as there's water ahead of you—and keep there; and so long as you steer due north, always takin' care not to switch off to the magnetic pole, of course you will keep there; and as all lines of longitude come to the same point at last, and as that's the point you are sailin' for, of course, if you can keep on that line of longitude as long as it lasts, it follows that you are bound to git there. If you come to any place on this line of longitude where there's not enough water to sail her, you have got to stop her, and then, if you can't see any way of goin' ahead on another line of longitude, you can put her about and go out of this on the same line of longitude that you came up into it on, and so you may expect to find a way clear. It's mighty simple sailin',—reg'lar spellin'-book navigation,—but it ain't the right thing."

"It seems that way, Cap'n Jim," said Sammy, "and I expect there's a long stretch of under-water business ahead of us yet. But still, we can't tell. How do we know that we will not get up, some mornin' soon, and look out of the upper skylight, and see nothin' but water over us, and daylight beyond that?"

"When we do that, Sammy," said Captain Jim, "then I'll truly believe I'm on a v'yage!"

CHAPTER VII

GOOD NEWS GOES FROM SARDIS

When Roland Clewe, after a voyage from Cape Tariff which would have been tedious to him no matter how short it had been, arrived at Sardis, his mind was mainly occupied with the people he had left behind him engulfed in the arctic seas, but this important subject did not prevent him from also giving attention to the other great object upon which his soul was bent. At St. John's, and at various points on his journey from there, he had received messages from the *Dipsey*, so that he knew that so far all was well, and when he met Mrs. Raleigh she had much to tell him of what might have been called the domestic affairs of the little vessel.

But while keeping himself in touch, as it were, with the polar regions, Roland Clewe longed to use the means he believed he possessed of peering into the subterranean mysteries of the earth beneath him. Work on the great machine by which he would generate his Artesian ray had been going on very satisfactorily, and there was every reason to believe that he would soon be able to put it into operation.

He had found Margaret Raleigh a different woman from what she had been when he left her. The absence had been short, but the change in her was very perceptible. She was quieter, she was more intent. She had always taken a great interest in his undertakings, but now that interest not only seemed to be deepened, but it was clouded by a certain anxiety. She had been an ardent, cheerful, and hopeful coworker with him, so far as she was able to do so, but now, although she was quite as ardent, the cheerfulness had disappeared, and she did not allude to the hopefulness.

But this did not surprise Clewe. He thought it the most natural thing in the world, for that polar expedition was enough to cloud the spirits of any woman who had an active part and share in it, and who was bound to feel that much of the responsibility of it rested upon her. At times this responsibility rested very heavily upon himself. But if thoughts of that little submerged party at the desolate end of the world came to him as he sat in his comfortable chair, and a cold dread shot through him, as it was apt to do at such times, he would hurriedly step to his telegraphic instrument, and when he had heard from Sammy Block that all was well with them, his spirits would rise again, and he would go on with his work with a soul cheered and encouraged.

But good news from the North did not appear to cheer and encourage the soul of Mrs. Raleigh. She seemed anxious and troubled even after she had heard it.

"Mr. Clewe," said she, when he had called upon her the next morning after his return, "suppose you were to hear bad news from the *Dipsey*, or were to hear nothing at all,—were to get no answer to your messages,—what would you do?"

His face grew troubled.

"That is a terrible question," he said. "It is one I have often asked myself. But there is no satisfactory answer to it. Of course, as I have told myself and have told you, there seems no reason to expect a disaster. There are no storms in the quiet depths in which the *Dipsey* is sailing. Ice does not sink down from the surface, and even if a floating iceberg should turn over, as they sometimes do in the more open sea, the *Dipsey* will keep low enough to avoid such danger. In fact, I feel almost sure that if she should meet with any obstacle which would prevent her from keeping on her course to the pole, all she would have to do would be to turn around and come back. As to the possibility of receiving no messages, I should conclude in that case that the wire had broken, and should wait a few days before allowing myself to be seriously alarmed. We have provided against such an accident. The *Dipsey* is equipped as a cable-laying vessel, and if her broken wire is not at too great a depth, she could recover it; but I have given orders that should such an accident occur, and they cannot reëstablish communication, they must return."

"Where to?" asked Mrs. Raleigh.

"To Cape Tariff, of course. The *Dipsey* cannot navigate the surface of the ocean for any considerable distance."

"And then?" she asked.

"I would go as quickly as possible to St. John's, where I have arranged that a vessel shall be ready for me, and I would meet the party at Cape Tariff, and there plan for a resumption of the enterprise, or bring them home. If they should not be able to get back to Cape Tariff, then all is blank before me. We must not think of it."

"But you would go up there all the same?" she said.

"Oh, yes, I would go there."

Mrs. Raleigh made no answer, but sat looking upon the floor.

"But why should we trouble ourselves with these fears?" continued Clewe. "We have considered all probable dangers and have provided against them, and at this moment everything is going on admirably, and there is every reason why we should feel hopeful and encouraged. I am sorry to see you look so anxious and downcast."

"Mr. Clewe," said she, "I have many anxieties; that is natural, and I cannot help it: but there is only one fear which seriously affects me."

"And that makes you pale," said Clewe. "Are you afraid that if I begin work with the Artesian ray I shall become so interested in it that I shall forget our friends up there in the North? There is no danger. No matter what I might be doing with the ray, I can disconnect the batteries in an instant, lock up the lens-house, and in the next half-hour start for St. John's. Then I will go North, if there is anything needed to be done there which human beings can do."

She looked at him steadfastly.

"That is what I am afraid of," she said.

Roland Clewe did not immediately speak. To him Margaret Raleigh was two persons. She was a woman of business, earnest, thoughtful, helpful, generous, and wise—a woman with whom he worked, consulted, planned, who made it possible for him to carry on the researches and enterprises to which he had devoted his life. But, more than this, she was another being. She was a woman he loved with a warm, passionate love, which grew day by day, and which a year ago had threatened to break down every barrier of prudence, and throw him upon his knees before her as a humiliated creature who had been pretending to love knowledge, philosophy, and science, but in reality had been loving beauty and riches. It was the fear of this catastrophe which had had a strong influence in taking him to Europe.

But now, by some magical influence,—an influence which he was not sure he understood,—that first woman, the woman of business, his partner, his co-worker, had disappeared, and there sat before him the woman he loved. He felt in his soul that if he tried to banish her it would be impossible; by no word or act could he at this moment bring back the other.

"Margaret Raleigh," he said suddenly, "you have thrown me from my balance. You may not believe it, you may not be able to imagine the possibility of it, but a spirit, a fiery spirit which I have long kept bound up within me, has burst its bonds and has taken possession of me. It may be a devil or it may be an angel, but it holds me and rules me, and it was set loose by the words you have just spoken. It is my love for you, Margaret Raleigh!" He went on, speaking rapidly. "Now, tell me," said he. "I have often come to you for advice and help—give it to me now. In laboratory, workshop, office, with you and away from you, abroad and at home, by day and by night, always and everywhere, I have loved you, longed for a sight of you, for a word from you, even if it had been a word about a stick or a pin. And always and everywhere I have determined to be true to myself, true to you, true to every principle of honor and common sense, and to say nothing to you of love until by some success I have achieved the right to do so. By words which made me fancy that you showed a personal interest in me, you have banished all those resolutions; you have— But I am getting madder and madder. Shall I leave this room? Shall I swear never to speak—"

She looked up at him. The ashiness had gone out of her face. Her eyes were bright, and as she lifted them toward him a golden softness and mistiness came into the centre of each of them, as though he might look down through them into her soul.

"If I were you," said she, "I would stay here and say whatever else you have to say."

He told her what more he had to say, but it was with his arms around her and his eyes close to her own.

"Do you know," she said, a little afterwards, "that for years, while you have been longing to get to the pole, to see down into the earth, and to accomplish all the other wonderful things that you are working at in your shops, I, too, have been longing to do something —longing hundreds and hundreds of times when we were talking about batteries and lenses and of the enterprises we have had on hand."

"And what was that?" he asked.

"It was to push back this lock of hair from your forehead. There, now; you don't know how much better you look!"

Before Clewe left the house it was decided that if, in any case, it should become necessary for him to start for the polar regions, these two were to be married with all possible promptness, and they were to go to the North together.

That afternoon the happy couple met again, and composed a message to the arctic seas. It was not deemed necessary yet to announce to society what had happened, but they both felt that their friends who were so far away, so completely shut out from all relations with the world, and yet so intimately connected with them, should know that Margaret Raleigh and Roland Clewe were engaged to be married.

Roland sent the message that evening from his office. He waited an unusually long time for a reply, but at last it came, from Sammy. The cipher, when translated, ran as follows:

> "Everybody as glad as they can be. Specially Sarah. Will send regular congratulations. Private message soon from me. We have got the devil on board."

Clewe was astonished. Samuel Block was such a quiet, steady person, so unused to extravagance or excitement, that this sensational message was entirely beyond his comprehension. He could fix no possible meaning to it, and he was glad that it did not come when he was in company with Margaret. It was too late to disturb her now, and he most earnestly hoped that an explanation would come before he saw her again.

That night he dreamed that there was a great opening near the pole, which was the approach to the lower regions, and that the *Dipsey* had been boarded by a diabolical passenger, who had come to examine her papers and inquire into the health of her passengers and crew.

CHAPTER VIII

THE DEVIL ON THE "DIPSEY"

AFTER a troubled night, Roland Clewe rose early. He had made up his mind that what Sammy had to communicate was something of a secret, otherwise it would have been telegraphed at once. For this reason he had not sent him a message asking for immediate and full particulars, but had waited. Now, however, he felt he could wait no longer. He must know something definite before he saw Margaret. Not to excite suspicion by telegraphing at untimely hours, he had waited until morning, and as the *Dipsey* was in about the same longitude as Sardis, and as they kept regular hours on board, without regard to the day and night of the arctic regions, he knew that he would not now be likely to rouse anybody from his slumbers by "calling up" the pole.

Although the telephone had been brought to such wonderful perfection in these days, Roland Clewe had never thought of using it for purposes of communication with the *Dipsey.* The necessary wire would have been too heavy, and his messages could not have been kept secret. In fact, this telegraphic communication between Sardis and the submarine vessel was almost as primitive as that in use in the latter part of the nineteenth century.

But Clewe had scarcely entered the office when he was surprised by the sound of the instrument, and he soon found that Sammy was calling to him from the polar seas. He sat down instantly, and received this message:

"Could not send more last night. Gibbs came in. Did not want him to know until I had heard from you. That Pole, Rovinski, is on board. Never knew it until yesterday. Had shaved off his beard and had his head cropped. He let it grow, and I spotted him. There is no mistake. I know him, but he has not found it out. He is on board to get ahead of you some way or other—perhaps get up a mutiny and go to the pole himself. He is the wickedest-looking man I ever saw, and he scared me when I first recognized him. Will send news as long as I am on hand. Let me know what you think. I want to chuck him into the scuttle-box.

"SAMUEL BLOCK."

"If that could be done," said Clewe to himself, "it would be an end to a great many troubles."

The scuttle-box on the submarine vessel was a contrivance for throwing things overboard. It consisted of a steel box about six feet long and two feet square at the ends, with a tightly fitting door at each extremity. When this scuttle-box was used it was run down through a square opening in the bottom of the *Dipsey*, the upper door was opened, matter to be disposed of was thrown into it, the upper door was shut and the lower one opened, whereupon everything inside of it descended into the sea, and water filled the box. When this box was drawn up by means of its machinery, the water was forced out, so that when it was entirely inside the vessel it was empty, and then the lower door was closed. For some moments the idea suggested by Sammy was very attractive to Clewe, and he could not help thinking that the occasion might arise when it would be perfectly proper to carry it into execution.

Now that he knew the import of Sammy's extraordinary communication, he felt that it would not be right to withhold his knowledge from Margaret. Of course, it might frighten her very much, but this was an enterprise in which people should expect to be frightened. Full confidence and hearty assistance were what these two now expected from each other.

"What is it exactly that you fear?" she asked, when she had heard the news.

"That is hard to say," replied Roland. "This man Rovinski is a scientific jackal. He has ambitions of the very highest kind, and he seeks to gratify them by fraud and villainy. It is now nearly two years since I found out that he has been shadowing me, endeavoring to discover what I am doing and how I am doing it; and the moment he does get a practical and working knowledge of anything, he will go on with the business on my lines as far as he can. Perhaps he may succeed, and, in any case, he will be almost certain to ruin my chances of success—that is, if I were not willing to buy him off. He would be pretty sure to try blackmail if he found he could not make good use of the knowledge he had stolen."

"The wretch!" cried Margaret. "Do you suppose he hopes to snatch from you the discovery of the pole?"

"That seems obvious," replied Roland, "and it's what Sammy thinks. It is the greatest pity in the world he was not discovered before he got on the *Dipsey.*"

"But what can you do?" cried Margaret.

"I cannot imagine," he replied, "unless I recall the *Dipsey* to Cape Tariff, and go up there and have him apprehended."

"Couldn't he be apprehended where he is?" she asked. "There are enough men on board to capture him and shut him up somewhere where he could do no harm."

"I have thought of that," answered Roland, "but it would be a very difficult and delicate thing to do. The men we have on board the *Dipsey* are trusty fellows,—at least, I thought so when they were engaged,—but there is no knowing what mutinous poison this Pole may have infused into their minds. If one of their number should be handcuffed and shut up without good reason being given, they might naturally rebel, and it would be very hard to give satisfactory reasons for arresting Rovinski. Even Gibbs might object to such harshness upon grounds which might seem to him vague and insufficient. Sammy knows Rovinski, I know him, but the others do not, and it might be difficult to convince them that he is the black-hearted scoundrel we think him, so we must be very careful what we do."

"As to calling the *Dipsey* back," said Margaret, "I would not do it. I would take the risks."

"I think you are right," said Clewe. "I have a feeling that if they come back to Cape Tariff they will not go out again. Some of the men may be discouraged already, and it would produce a bad impression upon all of them to turn back for some reason which they did not understand, or for a reason such as we could give them. I would not like to have to bring them back, now that they are getting on so well."

In the course of the morning there came from the officers, men, and passenger of the *Dipsey* a very cordial and pleasant message to Mr. Clewe and Mrs. Raleigh, congratulating them upon the happy event of which they had been informed. Sarah Block insisted on sending a supplementary message for herself, in which she was privately congratulatory to as great an extent as her husband would allow her to go, and which ended with a hope that, if they lived to be married, they would content themselves with doing their explorations on solid ground. She did not want to come back until she had seen the pole, but some of her ideas about that kind of travelling were getting to be a good deal more fixed than they had been.

The advice which Roland Clewe gave to Samuel Block was simple enough and perhaps unnecessary, but there was nothing else for him to say. He urged that the strictest watch be kept on Rovinski, that he should never be allowed to go near the telegraph instrument, and if, by insubordination or any bad conduct, a pretext for his punishment should offer itself, he should be immediately shut up where he could not communicate with the men. It was very important to keep him as much as possible in ignorance of what was going on, and of what should be accomplished. That, after all, was the main point. If the pole should be discovered, Rovinski must have nothing to do with it. Sammy replied that everything should be reported as soon as it turned up, and that any orders received from Mr. Clewe should be carried out, so long as he was alive to help carry them.

"Now," said Roland to Margaret, "there's nothing more that we can do in regard to that affair. As soon as there are any new developments we shall have to consider it again, but until then let us give up our whole souls to each other and the Artesian ray."

"It seems to me," said she, "that if we could have discovered a good while ago some sort of ray by which we could see into each other's souls, we should have gained a great many hours which are now lost."

"Not at all," replied Clewe. "They are not lost. In our philosophy, nothing is lost. All the joys we have missed in days that are past shall be crowded into the days that are to come."

CHAPTER IX

THE ARTESIAN RAY

In less than a week after the engagement of Roland Clewe and Margaret Raleigh, work on the great machine which was to generate the Artesian ray had so far progressed that it was possible to make some preliminary experiments with it. Although Clewe was sorry to think of the very undesirable companion which Samuel Block had carried with him into the polar regions, he could not but feel a certain satisfaction when he reflected that there was now no danger of Rovinski gaining any knowledge of the momentous operations which he had in hand in Sardis. He had received frequent telegrams from Sammy, but no trouble of any kind had yet arisen. It was true that the time for trouble, if there were to be any, had probably not yet arrived, but Clewe could not afford to disturb his mind with anticipations of disagreeable things which might happen.

The masses of lenses, batteries, tubes, and coils which constituted the new instrument had been set up in the lens-house, and it was with this invention that Clewe had succeeded in producing that new form of light which would not only penetrate any material substance, but illuminate and render transparent everything through which it passed, and which would, it was hoped, extend itself into the earth to a depth only limited by the electric power used to generate it.

Margaret was very anxious to be present at the first experiment, but Clewe was not willing that this should be.

"It is almost certain," he said, "that there will be failures at first, not caused perhaps by any radical defects in the apparatus, but by some minor fault in some part of it. This almost always happens in a new machine, and then there are uninteresting work and depressing waiting. As soon as I see that my invention will act as I want it to act, I shall have you in the lens-house with me. We may not be able to do very much at first, but when I really begin to do anything I want both of us to see it done."

There was no flooring in that part of the lens-house where the machine was set up, for Clewe wished his new light to operate directly upon the earth. At about eight feet above the ground was the opening through which the Artesian ray would pass perpendicularly downward whenever the lever should be moved which would establish the main electric current.

When all was ready, Clewe sent every one, even Bryce, the master workman, from the room. If his invention should totally fail, he wanted no one but himself to witness that failure, but if it should succeed, or even give promise of doing so, he would be glad to have the eyes of his trusted associates witness that success. When the doors were shut and locked, Clewe moved a lever, and a disk of light three feet in diameter immediately appeared upon the ground. It was a colorless light, but it seemed to give a more vivid hue to everything it shone upon—such as the little stones, a piece of wood half embedded in the earth, grains of sand, and pieces of mortar. In a few seconds, however, these things all disappeared, and there revealed itself to the eyes of Clewe a perfectly smooth surface of brown earth. This continued for some little time, now and then a rounded or a flattened stone appearing in it, and then gradually fading away.

As Clewe stared intently down upon the illuminated space, the brown earth seemed to melt and disappear, and he gazed upon a surface of fine sand, dark or yellowish, thickly interspersed with gravel-stones. This appearance changed, and a large rounded stone was seen almost in the centre of the glowing disk. The worn and smooth surface of the stone faded away, and he beheld what looked like a split section of a cobblestone. Then it disappeared altogether, and there was another flat surface of gravel and sand.

Between himself and the illuminated space on which he gazed—his breath quick and his eyes widely distended—there seemed to be nothing at all. To all appearances he was looking into a cylindrical hole a few feet deep. Everything between the bottom of this hole and himself was invisible. The light had made intervening substances transparent, and had deprived them of color and outlines. It was as though he looked through air.

Then his eyes fell upon the sides of this cylindrical opening, and these, illuminated, but not otherwise acted upon by the volume of Artesian rays, showed, in all their true colors and forms, everything which went to make up the sides of the bright cavity into which he looked. He saw the various strata of clay, sand, gravel, exactly as he would have seen them in a circular hole cut accurately and smoothly into the earth. No stone or lump protruded from the side of this apparent excavation, the inner surface of which was as smooth as if it had been cut down with a sharp instrument.

Clewe was frightened. Was it possible that this could be an imaginary cavity into which he was looking? He drew back. He was about to put out one foot to feel if it were really solid ground upon which this light was pouring, but he refrained. He got a long stick, and with it touched the centre of the light. What he felt was hard and solid. The end of the stick seemed to melt, and this startled him. He pulled back the stick. He could go on no further by himself. He must have somebody in here with him. He must have the testimony of some other eyes. He needed the company of a man with a cool and steady brain.

He ran to the door and called Bryce. When the master workman had entered, and the door had been locked behind him, he exclaimed:

"How pale you are! Does it work?"

"I think so," said Clewe, "but perhaps I am crazy and only imagine it. You see that circular patch of light upon the ground there? I want you to go close to it and look down upon it, and tell me what you see."

Bryce stepped quickly to the illuminated space. He looked down at it. Then he approached nearer. Then he carefully placed his feet by its edge and leaned over further, gazing intently downward, and he exclaimed:

"Good heavens! How did you make the hole?"

At that moment he heard a groan, and looking across the illuminated space, he saw Clewe tottering. In the next moment he was stretched upon the ground in a dead faint.

When Bryce had hurried to the side of his employer and had thrown a pitcher of water over him, it was not long before Clewe revived. In answer to Bryce's inquiries, he simply replied that he supposed he had been too much excited by the success of his work.

"You see," said he, "that was not a hole at all that you were looking into: it was the solid earth made transparent by the Artesian ray. The thing works perfectly. Please step to that lever and turn it off. I can stand no more at present."

Bryce moved the lever, and the light upon the ground disappeared. He approached the place where it had been. It was nothing but common earth. He put his foot upon it—he stamped. It was as solid as any other part of the State.

"And yet, I have looked down into it," he ejaculated, "at least half a dozen feet!"

When Bryce turned and went back to Clewe, he, too, was pale.

"I do not wonder you fainted," said he. "I do not believe it was what you saw that upset you. It was what you expected to see—wasn't that it?"

Clewe nodded in an indefinite way. "We won't talk about it now," said he. "I don't want any more experiments to-day. We will cover up the instrument and go."

When Roland Clewe reached his room, he sat down in an arm-chair to think. He had made a grand and wonderful success, but it was not upon that that his mind was now fixed. It was upon the casual and accidental effect of the work of his invention, of which he had never dreamed. Bryce had made a great mistake in thinking that it was not what Roland Clewe had seen, but what he had expected to see, which had caused him to drop insensible. It was what he had seen.

When the master workman had approached the lighted space upon the ground, Clewe stood opposite to him, a little distance from the apparatus. As Bryce looked down, he leaned forward more and more, until the greater part of his body was directly over the lighted space. Looking at him, Clewe was startled, amazed, and horrified to find that all that portion of his person which projected itself into the limits of the light had entirely disappeared, and that he was gazing upon a section of a man's trunk, brightly illuminated, and displayed in all its internal colors and outlines. Such a sight was enough to take away the senses of any man, and he did not wonder that he had fainted.

"Now," said he to himself, "all the time that I was looking into that apparent hole, never thinking that in order to see down into it I was obliged to project a portion of myself into the line of the Artesian ray, that portion of me was transparent, invisible. If Bryce had come in! and then"—as the thought came into his mind his heart stopped beating—"if Margaret had been there!"

For an hour he sat in his chair, racking his brain.

"She must see the working of the ray," he said. "I must tell her of my success. She must see it as soon as possible. It is cruel to keep her waiting. But how shall I manage it? How shall I shield her from the slightest possibility of what happened to me? Heavens!" he exclaimed, "if she had been there!"

After a time he determined that before any further experiments should take place he would build a circular screen, a little room, which should entirely surround the space on which the Artesian ray was operated. Only one person at a time should be allowed to enter this screened apartment, which should then be closed. It would make no difference if one should become invisible, provided there was no one else to know it.

It was on the evening of the next day that Margaret beheld the action of the Artesian ray. She greatly objected, at first, to going inside of the screened space by herself, and urged Roland to accompany her. But this he stoutly refused to do, assuring her that it was essential for but one person at a time to view the action of the ray. She demurred a good deal, but at last consented to allow herself to be shut up within the screen.

What Margaret saw was different from the gradual excavation which had revealed itself before the eyes of Roland. She looked immediately into a hole nearly ten feet deep. The action of the apparatus was such that the power of penetration gained by the ray during its operation at any time was retained, so that when the current was shut off the photic boring ceased, and recommenced, when the batteries were again put into action, at the point where it had left off. The moment Margaret looked down, she gave a little cry, and started back against the screen. She was afraid she would fall in.

"Roland," she exclaimed, "you don't mean to say that this is not really an opening into the earth?"

He was near her on the other side of the screen, and he explained to her the action of the light. Over and over she asked him to come inside and tell her what it was she saw, but he always refused.

"The bottom is beautifully smooth and gray!" she exclaimed. "What is that?"

"Sand," said Roland.

"And now it is white, like a piece of pottery," she said.

"That is white clay," said he.

"Don't you want to take my place," said she, "if you will not come with me?"

"No," said Roland. "Look down as long as you wish. I know pretty well what you will see for some time to come. Has there been any change?"

"The bottom is still white," she replied, "but it is glittering."

"That is white sand," said he. "The Artesian well which supplies the works revealed to me long ago the character of the soil at this spot, so that for a hundred feet or more I know what we may expect to see."

She came out hurriedly. "When you begin to speak of wells," she said, "I am frightened. If I should see water, I should lose my head." She sat down and put her hand before her eyes. "My brain is dazzled," she said. "I don't feel strong enough to believe what I have seen."

Roland shut off the current and opened the screen.

"Come here, Margaret," he said. "This is the spot upon which the light was shining. I think it will do you good to look at it. Tread upon it; it will help to reassure you that the things about us are real."

Margaret was silent for a few moments, and then, approaching Roland, she took him by both hands. "You have succeeded," said she. "You are the greatest inventor of this age!"

"My dear Margaret," he interrupted quickly, "do not let us talk in that way. We have only just begun to work. Above all things, do not let us get excited. If everything works properly, it will not be long before I can send the Artesian ray down into depths with which I am not acquainted,—how far I do not know,—but we must wait and see what is the utmost we can do. When we have reached that point, it will be in order to hoist our flags and blow our trumpets. I hope it will not be long before the light descends so deep that we shall be obliged to use a telescope."

"And will it not be possible, Roland," Margaret said earnestly, "that we shall ever look down into the earth together? When the light gets beyond the depth to which people have dug and bored, I shall never want to stand there alone behind the screen and see what next shall show itself."

"That screen is an awkward affair," said Roland. "Perhaps I may think of a method by which it can be done away with, and by which we can stand side by side and look down as far into the depths of the earth as our Artesian ray can be induced to bore."

CHAPTER X

"LAKE SHIVER"

STEADILY the *Dipsey* worked her way northward, and as she moved on her course her progress became somewhat slower than it had been at first. This decrease in speed was due partially to extreme caution on the part of Mr. Gibbs, the master electrician.

The attenuated cable, which continually stretched itself out behind the little vessel, was of the most recent and improved pattern for deep-sea cables. The conducting-wires in the centre of it were scarcely thicker than hairs, while the wires forming the surrounding envelope, although they were so small as to make the whole cable not more than an eighth of an inch in diameter, were far stronger than the thick submarine cables which were used in the early days of ocean telegraphy. These outer wires were made of the Swedish toughened steel fibre, and in 1939, with one of them a little over a sixteenth of an inch in diameter, a freight-ship of eleven thousand tons had been towed through the Great New Jersey Canal, which had then just been opened, and which connected Philadelphia with the ocean.

But notwithstanding his faith in the strength of the cable, Mr. Gibbs felt more and more, the farther he progressed from the habitable world, the importance of preserving it from accident. He had gone so far that it would be a grievous thing to be obliged to turn back.

The *Dipsey* sailed at a much lower depth than when she had first started upon her submarine way. After they had become accustomed to the feeling of being surrounded by water, her inmates seemed to feel a greater sense of security when they were well down below all possible disturbing influence. When they looked forward in the line of the search-light, or through any of the windows in various parts of the vessel, they never saw anything but water—no fish, nothing floating. They were too far below the ice above them to see it, and too far from what might be on either side of them to catch a glimpse of it. The bottom was deep below them, and it was as though they were moving through an aqueous atmosphere.

They were comfortable, and beginning to be accustomed to their surrounding circumstances. The air came in regularly and steadily through the electric gills, and when deteriorated air had collected in the expiration-chamber in the upper part of the vessel, it was forced out by a great piston, which sent it by a hundred little valves into the surrounding water. Thus the pure air came in and the refuse air went out just as if the little *Dipsey* had been healthfully breathing as it pushed its way through the depths.

Mrs. Block was gaining flesh. The narrow accommodations, the everlasting electric light, the sameness of food, and a total absence of incident had become quite natural to her, and she had ceased to depend upon the companionship of the dust-brush and the almanac to carry her mind back to what she considered the real things of life.

Sarah had something better now to take her mind back to Sardis and the people and things on dry land. The engagement and probably early marriage of Mr. Clewe and Mrs. Raleigh had made a great impression upon her, and there were days when she never thought of the pole, so busy was she in making plans based upon the future connection of the life of herself and Sammy and that of Mr. and Mrs. Clewe.

Sammy and his wife had very good quarters within the boundaries of the works, but Sarah had never been quite satisfied with them, and when the new household of Clewe should be set up, and all the new domestic arrangements should be made, she hoped for better things. Mr. Clewe's little cottage would then be vacant, for, of course, he and his wife would not live in such a place as that, and she thought that she and Sammy should have it. Hour by hour and day by day she planned the furnishing, the fitting, and the management of this cottage.

She was determined to have a servant—a woman thoroughly capable of doing general housework; and then there were times when she believed that if Sammy should succeed in finding the pole his salary would be increased, and they might be able to afford two servants. Over and over again did she consider the question whether, in this latter case, these women should both be general-housework servants, or one of them a cook and the other a chambermaid and laundress. There was much to be considered on each side. In the latter case more efficient work could be obtained, but in the former, in case one of them should suddenly leave, or go away for a day out, the other could do all the work. It was very pleasant to Mrs. Block to sit in a comfortable arm-chair and gaze thus into the future. Sometimes she looked up into the water above, and sometimes out into the water ahead, but she could see nothing. But in the alluring expanse of her fancied future she could see anything which she chose to put there.

Sammy, however, did not increase in flesh. In fact, he grew thinner. Nothing important in regard to the Pole Rovinski had occurred, but, of course, something would occur; otherwise why did the Pole come on board the *Dipsey?* Endless conjectures as to what Rovinski would do when he did anything, and when he would begin to do it, kept the good Samuel awake during many hours when he should have been soundly sleeping. He had said nothing yet to Mr. Gibbs in regard to the matter. Every day he made a report to Roland Clewe about Rovinski, but Clewe's instructions were that so long as the Pole behaved himself properly there was no reason to trouble the minds of the party on board with fears of rascality on his part. They had enough to occupy their minds, without any disturbing influence of that sort.

Clewe's own opinion on the subject was that Rovinski could do nothing but act as a spy, and afterwards make dishonest use of the knowledge he should acquire. But the man had put himself into Clewe's power, and he could not possibly get away from him until he should return to Cape Tariff, and even there it would be difficult. The proper and only thing to do was to keep him in custody as long as possible. When he should be brought back to a region of law and justice, it might be that the Pole could be prevented, for a time at least, from using the results of his knavish observations.

There was another person on board whose mind was disturbed by Rovinski. This was Mr. Marcy, the assistant engineer, an active, energetic fellow, filled with ambition and love of adventure, and one of the most hopeful and cheerful persons on board. He had never heard of Rovinski, and did not know that there was anybody in the world who was trying to benefit himself by fraudulent knowledge of Mr. Clewe's discoveries and inventions, but he hated the Pole on his own account.

The man's countenance was so villainous that it was enough of itself to arouse the dislike of a healthy-minded young fellow such as Marcy, but, moreover, the Pole had habits of sneaking about the vessel, and afterwards retiring to quiet corners, where he would scribble in a pocket note-book. Such conduct as this in a man whose position corresponded with that of a common seaman on an ordinary vessel seemed contrary to discipline and good conduct, and he mentioned the matter to Mr. Gibbs.

"I suppose the man is writing a letter to his wife," said the latter. "You would not want to hinder him from doing that, would you?"

And to this no good answer could be made.

The Pole never took notes when Sammy was anywhere where he could see him, and if Mr. Marcy had reported this conduct to the old man, it is likely that

Rovinski would speedily have been deprived of pencils and paper, and his real character been made known to the officers.

One day it was observed by those who looked out of the window in the upper deck that the water above them was clearer than they usually saw it, and when the electric lights in the room immediately under the window were turned out it was almost possible to discern objects in the room. Instantly there was a great stir on board the *Dipsey*, and observations soon disclosed the fact that there was nothing above the vessel but water and air.

At first, like an electric flash, the thought ran through the vessel that they had reached the open sea which is supposed to surround the pole, but reflection soon showed those who were cool enough to reflect that, if this were the case, this sea must be much larger than they had supposed, for they were still a long way from the pole. Upon one thing, however, everybody was agreed: they must ascend without loss of time to the surface of the water above them.

Up went the *Dipsey*, and it was not long before the great glass in the upper deck admitted pure light from the outer world. Then the vessel rose boldly and floated upon the surface of the open sea.

The hatchways were thrown open, and in a few moments nearly everybody on board stood upon the upper deck, breathing the outer air and gazing about them in the pure sunlight. The deck was almost flat, and surrounded by a rail. The flooring was wet and somewhat slippery, but nobody thought of that; they thought of nothing but the wonderful place in which they found themselves.

They were in a small lake surrounded by lofty and precipitous icebergs. On every side these glittering crags rose high into the air; nowhere was there a break or an opening. They seemed to be in a great icy prison. It might be supposed that it would be exhilarating to a party which had long been submerged beneath the sea to stand once more in the open air and in the light of day. But this was not the case. The air they breathed was sharp and cold, and cut into throats and lungs now accustomed to the softer air within their vessel. Scarcely any of them, hurrying out of the warm cabins, had thought of the necessity of heavy wraps, and the bitter cold of the outer air perceptibly chilled their blood. Involuntarily, even while they were staring about them, they hurried up and down the deck to keep themselves warm.

The officers puzzled their brains over the peculiar formation of this ice-encompassed lake. It seemed as if a great ice-mountain had sunk down from the midst of its companions, and had left this awful hole. This, however, was impossible. No law of nature would account for such a disappearance of an ice-mountain. Mr. Gibbs thought, under some peculiar circumstances, a mass of ice might have broken away and floated from its surroundings, and that afterwards, increased in size, it had floated back again, and, too large to reenter the opening it had made, had closed up the frozen walls of this lonely lake, accessible only to those who should rise up into it from the sea. Suddenly Mrs. Block stopped.

"What is that?" she cried, pointing to a spot in the icy wall which was nearest to the vessel. Instantly every eye was turned that way. They saw a very distinct irregular blotch, surrounded by almost transparent ice.

Several glasses were now levelled upon this spot, and it was discovered to be the body of a polar bear, lying naturally upon its side, as if asleep, and entirely incased in ice.

"It must have lain down to die, on the surface of the ice," said Mr. Gibbs, "and gradually the ice has formed above it, until it now rests in that vast funeral casket."

"How long since he laid down there to die, Mr. Gibbs?" asked Sarah, as she took the glass from her eye. "He looks as natural as if he was asleep."

"I cannot say," he answered. "It may have been hundreds, even thousands, of years ago."

"Oh, horrible!" said Sarah. "All that makes me shiver, and I am sure I don't need anything to make me do that. I wish we would go down, Sammy. I would like to get out of this awful place, with those dreadful glitterin' walls that nobody could get up or over, and things lyin' frozen for a thousand years; and, besides, it's so cold!"

It seemed as if Sarah's words had struck the keynote to the feelings of the whole company. In the heart of every one arose a strong desire to sink out of this cold, bleak, terrifying open air into the comfortable, motherly arms of the encircling waters. For a few minutes Captain Jim Hubbell had experienced a sense of satisfaction at finding himself once more upon the deck of a vessel floating upon the open sea. He felt that he was in his element, and that the time had come for him to assume his proper position as a sailor;

but this feeling soon passed, and he declared that his spine was like a long icicle.

"Don't you think we had better go down again?" said Sammy. "I think we have all seen enough of this, and it isn't anything that any use can be made of."

"You are right," said Mr. Gibbs. "Let everybody go below."

But it was not easy for everybody to obey this command. The wet decks were now covered with a thin surface of ice, and those who had been standing still for a few moments found it difficult to release their shoes from the flooring of the deck, while several of the men slipped down as they made their way to the forward hatch. As for Sarah Block, she found it impossible to move at all. Her shoes were of a peculiar kind, the soles being formed of thick felt, and these, having been soaked with water, had frozen firmly to the deck. She tried to make a step, and almost fell over.

"Heavens and earth!" she screamed, "don't let this boat go down and leave me standing outside!"

Her husband and two men tried to release her, but they could not disengage her shoes from the deck. So Sammy was obliged to loosen her shoe-strings, and then he and another man lifted her out of her shoes and carried her to the hatchway, whence she very speedily hurried below.

Everybody was now inside the vessel, the hatches were tightly closed, and the *Dipsey* began to sink. When she had descended to the comparatively temperate depths of the sea, and her people found themselves in her warm and well-lighted compartments, there was a general disposition to go about and shake hands with one another. Some of them even sang little snatches of songs, so relieved were they to get down out of that horrible upper air.

"Of course, I shall never see my shoes again," said Mrs. Block. "And they were mighty comfortable ones, too. I suppose, when they have been down here awhile in this water, which must be almost lukewarmish compared to what it is on top, they will melt loose and float up; and then, Sammy, suppose they lodge on some of that ice and get frozen for a thousand years! Good gracious! It sets me all of a creep to think of that happenin' to my shoes, that I have been wearin' every day! Don't you want a cup of tea?"

"It's a great pity," thought Sammy to himself, "that it wasn't that Pole that had his feet frozen to the deck. The rest of us might have been lucky enough not to have noticed him as the boat went down."

"We ought to get a name for that body of water up there," said Mr. Gibbs, as he was writing out his report of the day's adventures. "Shall we call it 'Lake Clewe'?"

"Oh, don't do that!" exclaimed Sammy Block. "Mr. Clewe's too good a man to have his name tacked on to that hole. If you want to name it, why don't you call it 'Lake Shiver'?"

"That is a good name," answered Mr. Gibbs; and so it was called.

CHAPTER XI

THEY BELIEVE IT IS THE POLAR SEA

WITH no intention of ascending again into any accidental holes in the ice above them, the voyagers on the *Dipsey* kept on their uneventful way, until, on the third day after their discovery of the lake, the electric bell attached to the heavy lead, which always hung suspended below the vessel, rang violently, indicating that it had touched the bottom. This sound startled everybody on board. In all their submarine experiences they had not yet sunk down low enough to be anywhere near the bottom of the sea.

Of course, orders were given to ascend immediately, and at the same time a minor search-light was directed upward through the deck skylight. To the horror of the observers, ice could plainly be seen stretching above them like an irregular, gray sky.

Here was a condition of things which had not been anticipated. The bottom below and the ice above were approaching each other. Of course, it might have been some promontory of the rocks under the sea against which their telltale lead had struck; but there was an instrument on board for taking soundings by means of a lead suspended outside and a wire running through a waterproof hole in the bottom of the vessel, and when the *Dipsey* had risen a few fathoms, and was progressing very slowly, this instrument was used at frequent intervals, and it was found that the electric lead had not touched a rock projecting upward, and that the bottom was almost level.

Mr. Gibbs's instrument gave him an approximate idea of the vessel's depth in the water, and the dial connected with the sounding apparatus told him hour by hour that the distance from the bottom, as the vessel kept forward on the same plane, was becoming less and less. Consequently he determined, so long as he was able to proceed, to keep the *Dipsey* as near as possible at a median distance between the ice and the bottom.

This was an anxious time. So long as they had felt that they had plenty of sea-room the little party of adventurers had not yet recognized any danger which they thought sufficient to deter them from further progress; but if the ice and the bottom were coming together, what could they do? It was possible, by means of explosives they carried, to shatter the ice above them, but action of this kind had not been contemplated unless they should find themselves at the pole and still shut in by ice. They did not wish to get out into the open air at the point where they found themselves, and, moreover, it would not have been safe to explode their great bombs in such shallow water. A consultation was held, and it was agreed that the best thing to do was to diverge from the course they had steadily maintained, and try to find a deeper channel leading to the north. Accordingly, they steered eastward.

It was not long before they found that they had judged wisely. The bottom descended far out of the reach of their electric lead, and they were enabled to keep a safe distance below the overhanging ice.

"I feel sure," said Mr. Gibbs, "that we came near running against some outreaching portion of the main western continent, and now we have got to look out for the foundations of Greenland's icy mountains." He spoke cheerily, for he wished to encourage his companions, but there was a very anxious look upon his face when he was not speaking to any one.

The next day every one was anxious, whether he spoke or was silent. The bottom was rising again, and the *Dipsey* was obliged to sail nearer and nearer to the ice above. Between two dangers, constricted and trammelled as they were, none of them could help feeling the terrors of their position, and if it had not been for the encouraging messages which continually came to them from Sardis, they might not have been able to keep up brave hearts.

After two days of most cautious progress, during which the water became steadily shallower and shallower, it was discovered that the ice above, which they were now obliged to approach much more closely than they had ever done before, was comparatively thin, and broken in many places. Great cracks could be seen in it here and there, and movements could be discerned indicating that it was a floe, or floating mass of ice. If that were the case, it was not impossible that they were now nearing the edge of the ice under which they had so long been sailing, and that beyond them was the open water. If they could reach that, and find it the unobstructed sea which was supposed to exist at this end of the earth's axis, their expedition was a success, for at that moment they were less than one hundred miles from the pole.

Whether the voyagers on the *Dipsey* were more excited when the probable condition of their situation became known to them, or whether Roland Clewe and Margaret Raleigh, in the office of the works at Sardis, were the more greatly moved when they received that day's report from the arctic regions, it would be hard to say. If there should be room enough for the little submarine vessel to safely navigate beneath the ice which there was such good reason to believe was floating on the edge of the body of water they had come in search of, and on whose surface they might freely sail, what then was likely to hinder them from reaching the pole? The presence of ice in the vicinity of that extreme northern point was feared by no one concerned in the expedition, for it was believed that the rotary motion of the earth would have a tendency to drive it away from the pole by centrifugal force.

The little thermometer-boat which during the submarine voyage of the *Dipsey* had constantly preceded her, to give warning of the sunken base of some great iceberg, was now drawn in close to the bow. There was so much ice near that its warnings were constant, and therefore unneeded. The electric lead-line was shortened to the length of a few fathoms, and even then it sometimes suddenly rang out its alarm. After a time the bottom of the sea became visible through the stout glass of a protected window near the bow, and a man was placed there to report what he could see below them.

It had now become so light that in some parts of the vessel the electric lamps were turned out. Fissures of considerable size appeared in the ice above, and then, to the great excitement of every one, the vessel slowly moved under the surface of a wide space of open water. But the ice could be seen ahead, and she did not rise. The bottom came no nearer, and the *Dipsey* moved cautiously on. Nobody thought of eating. They did not talk much, but at every one of the outlooks there were eager faces.

At last they saw nothing above them but floating fragments of ice. Still they kept on, until they were plainly moving below the surface of open water. Then Mr. Gibbs looked at Sammy.

"I think it is time to rise," said he, and Sammy passed the word that the *Dipsey* was going up into the upper air.

When the little craft, so long submerged in the quiet depths of the arctic sea, had risen until she rested on the surface of the water, there was no general desire, as there had been when she emerged into Lake Shiver, to rush upon the upper deck. Instead of that, the occupants gathered together and looked at each other in a hesitating way, as if they were afraid to go out and see whether they were really in an open sea, or lying in some small ice-locked body of water.

Mr. Gibbs was very pale.

"My friends," said he, "we are going on deck to find out whether or not we have reached the open polar sea, but we must not be excited, and we must not jump to hurried conclusions. We may have found what we are in search of, and we may not have found it yet. But we will go up and look out upon the polar world as far as we can see it, and we shall not decide upon this thing or that until we have thoroughly studied the whole situation. The engines are stopped, and every one may go up, but I advise you all to put on your warmest clothes. We should remember our experience at Lake Shiver."

"It wouldn't be a bad idea," said Sammy Block, "to throw out a lot of tarpaulins to stand on, so that none of us will get frozen to the wet deck, as happened before."

When the hatch was opened, a man with a black beard pushed himself forward toward the companionway.

"Keep back here, sir," said Mr. Marcy, clapping his hand upon the man's shoulder.

"I want to be ready to spread the tarpaulins, sir," said he, with a wriggling motion, as if he would free himself.

"You want to be the first to see the polar sea—that is my opinion," said Mr. Marcy. "But you keep back there where you belong." And with that he gave the eager Rovinski a staggering push to the rear.

Five minutes afterwards Margaret Raleigh and Roland Clewe, sitting close together by the telegraph instrument in the works at Sardis, received the following message:

"We have risen to the surface of what we believe to be the open polar sea. Everybody is on deck but me. It is very cold, and a wind is blowing. Off to our left there are high mountains, stretching westward as far as we can see. They are all snow and ice, but they look blue and green and beautiful. From these mountains there comes this way a long cape, with a little mountain at the end of it. Mr. Gibbs says this mountain, which is about twenty miles away, must be just about between us and the pole, but it does not cut us off. Far out to the right, as far as we can see, there is open water shining in the sun, so that we can sail around the cape. On the right and behind us, southward, are everlasting plains of snow and ice, which we have just come from under. They are so white that it dazzles our eyes to look at them. In some places they are smooth, and in some places they are tumbled up. On the very edge of the sky, in that direction, there are more mountains. There are no animals or people anywhere. It is very cold, even inside the vessel. My fingers are stiff. Now that we are out on the water, in regular shipshape, Captain Jim Hubbell has taken command. We are going to cruise northward as soon as we can get things regulated for outside sailing.

"SAMUEL BLOCK."

CHAPTER XII

CAPTAIN HUBBELL TAKES COMMAND

It was a high-spirited and joyous party that the *Dipsey* now carried. Not one of them doubted that they had emerged from under the ice into the polar sea. To the northeast they could see its waves shining and glistening all the way to the horizon, and they believed that beyond the cape in front of them these waters shone and glistened to the very north. They breathed the polar air, which, as they became used to it, was exhilarating and enlivening, and they basked in the sunshine, which, although it did not warm their bodies very much, cheered and brightened their souls. But what made them happier than anything else was the thought that they would soon start direct for the pole, on top of the water, and with nothing in the way.

When Captain Jim Hubbell took command of the *Dipsey* the state of affairs on that vessel underwent a great change. He was sharp, exact, and severe; he appreciated the dignity of his position, and he wished to let everybody see that he did so. The men on board who had previously been workmen now became sailors—at least, in the eyes of Captain Hubbell. He did not know much about the work that they had been in the habit of doing, but he intended to teach them the duties of sailors just as soon as he could find any such duties for them to perform. He walked about the deck with an important air, and looked for something about which he might give orders. There were no masts or spars or shrouds or sheets, but there were tarpaulins on the deck, and these were soon arranged in seaman-like fashion. A compass was rigged up on deck, and Captain Hubbell put himself into communication with the electric steersman.

It was morning when the *Dipsey* emerged from the sea, although day and night were equally bright at that season, and at twelve o'clock Captain Hubbell took an observation, assisted by Sammy. The result was as follows: longitude, 69° 30′; latitude, 88° 42′.

"It strikes me," said Captain James Hubbell, "that that latitude goes over anything ever set down by any skipper, ancient or modern."

"I should say so," answered Sammy. "But that record won't be anything compared to what we are goin' to set down."

Work went on very rapidly, in order to get the *Dipsey* into regular nautical condition, and although it was out of his line, Captain Hubbell made it a point to direct as much of it as he could. The electric gills were packed as close to the side of the vessel as possible, and the various contrivances for heating and ventilation when sailing in the open air were put into working order. At four o'clock in the afternoon our party started to round the icy promontory ahead of them, encouraged by a most hearty and soul-inspiring message from the hills of New Jersey.

"It's all very fine," said Sarah Block to her husband, "for everybody on board to be talkin' about what a splendid thing it is to be sailin' on the surface of the sea, in the bright and beautiful air, but I must say that I like a ship to keep quiet when I am on board of her. I had a pretty bad time when I was comin' up on the *Go Lightly*, but she was big and didn't wabble like this little thing. We went along beautifully when we were under the water, with the floor just as level as if we were at home in a house, but now I am not feelin' anything like as well as I have been. For my part, I think it would be a great deal better to sink down again, and go the rest of the way under the water. I am sure we found it very comfortable, and a great deal warmer."

Sammy laughed.

"Oh, that would not do at all," he said. "You can't expect the people on board this vessel to be willin' to scoop along under the water when they have got a chance of sailin' like Christians in the open air. It's the sudden change that troubles you, Sarah. You'll soon get over it."

But Sarah was not satisfied. The *Dipsey* rolled a good deal, and the good woman was frequently obliged to stop and steady herself when crossing the little cabin.

"I feel," said she, "as if I had had a Christmas dinner yesterday, and somebody else had made the pies."

The dissatisfied condition of Mrs. Block had a cheering influence upon Captain Hubbell when he heard of it.

"By George!" said he, "this seems like good old times. When I was young, and there was women on board, they all got a little seasick; but nowadays, with these ball-and-socket ships, you never hear of that sort of thing. A seasick woman is the most natural thing I have struck yet on this cruise."

Mrs. Block's uneasiness, however, did not last very long. A few electric capsules of half an alterative volt each soon relieved her. But her mind was still out of order; she was not satisfied. She had accustomed herself to submerged conditions, and ordinary voyaging was very different.

"It wouldn't surprise me," she said, "if we should find that there wasn't any pole. That's about the way these things generally turn out."

In a few hours the *Dipsey* had rounded the cape, keeping well offshore. In front was a clear sweep of unobstructed water. With their telescopes they could see nothing on the horizon which indicated the presence of land. If the sea should stretch out before them, as they hoped and expected, a sail of about seventy miles ought to bring them to the pole. The *Dipsey* did not go at full speed; there was no hurry, and as he was in absolutely unknown waters, Captain Hubbell wished to take no risks of sunken reefs or barely submerged islands. Soundings were frequent, and they found that the polar sea—at least, that part over which they were sailing—was a comparatively shallow body of water.

Before they left Sardis, preparations had been made for an appropriate and permanent designation of the exact position of the northern end of the earth's axis. If this should be discovered to be on solid land, there was a great iron standard, or column, on board, in detached parts, with all appliances for setting it up firmly in the rocks or earth or ice; but if the end of the said axis should be found to be covered by water of not too great depth, a buoy had been provided which should be anchored upon the polar point.

This buoy was a large, hollow, aluminium globe, from which a tall steel flag-post projected upward to a considerable height, bearing a light weather-vane, which, when the buoy should be in its intended position, would always point southward, no matter which way the wind might blow. This great buoy contained various appropriate articles, which had been hermetically sealed up in it before it left Sardis, where it was manufactured. All the documents, books, coins, and other articles which are usually placed in the corner-stones of important buildings were put in this, together with the names of the persons who had gone on this perilous expedition and those who had been its projectors and promoters. More than this, there was an appropriate inscription deeply cut into the metal on the upper part of the buoy, with a space left for the date of the discovery, should it ever take place.

But the mere ceremony of anchoring a buoy at the exact position of the pole was not enough to satisfy the conscientious ambition of Mr. Gibbs. He had come upon this perilous voyage with the earnest intention of doing his duty in all respects, while endeavoring to make the great discovery of the age; and if that discovery should be made, he believed that his country should share in the glory and in the material advantage, whatever that might be, of the achievement. Consequently it was his opinion that if the pole should be discovered, the discoverers should take possession of it in the name of their country. Every one on board—except Sarah Block, who had something to say about the old proverb concerning the counting of chickens before they are hatched—thought this a good idea, and when the plan was submitted to Mr. Clewe and Mrs. Raleigh, they heartily approved.

Preparations were now made to take possession of the pole if they should reach it on the water. On the after part of the deck a ring about three feet in diameter was marked, and it was arranged that when they had ascertained, by the most accurate observations and calculations, the exact position of the pole, they would so guide their vessel that this ring should be, as nearly as possible, directly over it. Then one of the party should step inside of the ring and take possession of the pole. After this the buoy would be anchored, and their intended scientific observations and explorations would proceed.

It was supposed, both on the *Dipsey* and at Sardis, that Mr. Gibbs would assume the honor of this act of taking possession, but that gentleman declined to do so. He considered that he would no more discover the pole, if they should reach it, than would his companions, and he also believed that, from a broad point of view, Mr. Roland Clewe was the real discoverer. Consequently he considered that the direct representative of the interests of Mr. Clewe should take possession, and it was decided that Samuel Block should add the north pole to the territory of his native land.

When this had been settled, a very great change came over the mind of Sarah Block. That her husband should be the man to do this great thing filled her with pride and alert enthusiasm.

"Sammy," she exclaimed, "when you are doin' that, you will be the greatest man in this world, and you will stand at the top of everything."

"Suppose there should be a feller standin' on the south pole," said Sammy, "wouldn't he have the same right to say that he was on top of everything?"

"No," said Sarah, sharply. "The way I look at it, the north pole is above and the south pole is below. But there ain't any other feller down there, so we needn't talk about it. And now, Sammy, if you are goin' to take possession of the pole, you ought to put on your best clothes. For one thing, you should wear a pair of those new red flannel socks that you haven't had on yet; it will be a good way to christen 'em. Everything on you ought to be perfectly fresh and clean, and just as nice as you've got. This will be the first time that anybody ever took possession of a pole, and you ought to look your very best. I would ask you to shave, because you would look better that way, but I suppose if you took off your beard you would take cold in your jaws. And I want you to stand up straight, and talk as long about it as you can. You are too much given to cuttin' off ceremonies mighty short, as I remember was the case when you were statin' your 'pinions about our weddin'. But I had my way then, and I want to have it now. You are goin' to be a big man, Sammy, and your name will go all over the world, so you must screw yourself up to as much eminence as you think you can stand."

Sammy laughed. "Well, I will do what I can," said he,—"that is, providin' our chickens are hatched."

"Oh, they'll come out all right," said Sarah. "I haven't the least doubt of it, now that you are to be the chief figure in the hatchin'."

Shortly after the ordinary hour for rising, an order was issued by Captain Hubbell, and enforced by Samuel Block, that no one should be allowed to come on deck who had not eaten breakfast. There were those on board that vessel who would have stayed on deck during all the hours which should have been devoted to sleeping, had it not been so cold. There would probably be nothing to see when they reached the pole, but they wanted to be on hand, that they might see for themselves that there was nothing to see.

CHAPTER XIII

LONGITUDE EVERYTHING

THE sun was as high in the polar heavens as it ever rises in that part of the world. Captain Hubbell stood on the deck of the *Dipsey* with his quadrant in hand to take an observation. The engine had been stopped, and nearly everybody on the vessel now surrounded him.

"Longitude everything," said Captain James Hubbell, "latitude ninety, which is as near as I can make it out."

"My friends," said Mr. Gibbs, looking about him, "we have found the pole."

And at these words every head was uncovered.

For some moments no one spoke, but there was a look upon the faces of most of the party which expressed a feeling which was voiced by Sarah Block.

"And yet," said she, speaking in a low tone, "there's nothing to see, after all!"

Captain Hubbell's observations and calculations, although accurate enough for all ordinary nautical purposes, were not sufficiently precise to satisfy the demands of the present occasion, and Mr. Gibbs and the electricians began a series of experiments to determine the exact position of the true pole.

The vessel was now started, steering this way and that; sometimes backed, and then sent forward again. After about an hour of this zigzag work Mr. Gibbs ordered the engine stopped.

"Now," said he, "the ring on the deck is exactly over the pole, and we may prepare to take possession."

At these words Samuel Block disappeared below, followed by his wife.

"That was an odd expression of yours, Captain Hubbell," said Mr. Gibbs, "when you said we had reached longitude everything. It is correct, of course, but it had not struck me in that light."

"Of course it is correct," said Captain Hubbell. "The end of every line of longitude is right here in a bunch. If you were a bird, you could choose one of 'em and fly down along it to Washington or Greenwich or any other point you pleased. Longitude everything is what it is. We've got the whole of 'em right under us."

Now Samuel Block came on deck, where everybody else on board soon gathered. With a furled flag in his hand, dressed in his best and cleanest clothes, and with a large fur cloak thrown over his shoulders, Mr. Block advanced toward the ring on the deck, near the compass.

But he was yet several yards from this point when a black figure, crouching close to the deck, issued from among the men, a little in the rear of the party, and made a dash toward the ring. It was the Pole Rovinski, who had been standing, quivering with excitement, waiting for this supreme moment. But almost at the same instant there sprang from the side of Mr. Gibbs another figure, with a face livid with agitation. This was Mr. Marcy, who had noticed the foreigner's excitement and had been watching him. Like a stone from a catapult, Mr. Marcy rushed toward Rovinski, taking a course diagonal to that of the latter, and, striking him with tremendous force just before he reached the ring, he threw him against the rail with such violence that the momentum given to his head and body carried them completely over it, and, his legs following, the man went headlong into the sea.

Instantly there was a shout of horror. Sarah Block screamed violently, and her husband exclaimed: "That infernal Pole! He has gone down to the pole, and I hope he may stay there!"

"What does all this mean, Mr. Marcy?" roared Captain Hubbell. "And why did you throw him overboard?"

"Never mind now," cried Sammy, his voice rising above the confusion. "I will tell you all about it. I see what he was up to. He wanted to take possession of the pole in his own beastly name, most likely."

"I don't understand a word of all this," exclaimed Mr. Gibbs. "But there is the man—he has risen to the surface."

"Shall we let him sink," cried Sammy, "or haul him aboard?"

"Let the man sink!" yelled Captain Hubbell. "What do you mean, sir?"

"Well, I suppose it wouldn't do," said Sammy, "and we must get him aboard."

Captain Hubbell roared out orders to throw out life-preservers and lower a boat; but remembering that he was not on board a vessel of the olden times, he changed the order and commanded that a patent boat-hook be used upon the man in the water.

The end of this boat-hook, which could be shot out like a fishing-rod, was hooked into Rovinski's clothes, and he was pulled to the vessel. Then a rope was lowered, and he was hauled on board, shivering and shaking.

"Take him below and put him in irons," cried Sammy.

"Mr. Block," said Captain Hubbell, "I want you to understand that I am skipper of this vessel, and that I am to give orders. I don't know anything about this man, but do you want him put in irons?"

"I do," said Sammy, "for the present."

"Take that man below and put him in irons!" roared Captain Hubbell.

"And give him some dry clothes," added Sarah Block.

When the confusion consequent upon the incident had subsided, there was a general desire not to delay for a moment the actual act of taking legal possession of the pole they had discovered.

Sammy now advanced, his fur cap in one hand and his flag in the other, and took his position in the centre of the circle. For a few moments he did not speak, but turned slowly around, as if desirous of availing himself of the hitherto unknown privilege of looking southward in every direction.

"I'm glad he remembers what I told him," said Sarah. "He's making it last as long as he can."

"As the representative of Roland Clewe, Esq.," said Samuel, deliberately and distinctly, "I take possession of the north pole of this earth, in the name of United North America." With these words he unfurled his flag, with its broad red and white stripes, and its seven great stars in the field of blue,* and stuck the sharp end of the flagstaff into the deck in the centre of the circle.

"Now," said he to his companions, "this pole is ours, and if anybody ever comes into this sea from Russia, or Iceland, or any other place, they will find the north pole has been preëmpted." At this three hearty cheers were given by the assembled company, who thereupon put on their hats.

The rest of that day and part of the next were spent in taking soundings, and very curious and surprising results were obtained. The electric lead, which rang the instant it touched bottom, showed that the sea immediately over the pole was comparatively shallow, while in every direction from this point the depth increased rapidly. Many interesting experiments were made, which determined the character of the bottom and the varied deposits thereupon, but the most important result of the work of Mr. Gibbs and his associates was the discovery of the formation of the extreme northern portion of the earth. The rock-bed of the sea was found to be of the shape of a flattened cone, regularly sloping off from the polar point.

This peculiar form of the solid portion of the earth at the pole was occasioned, Mr. Gibbs believed, by the rotary motion of the bottom of the sea, which moved much more rapidly than the water above it, thus gradually wearing itself away, and giving to our earth that depression at the poles which has been so long known to geographers.

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* It must be understood that at this time the seven great countries of North America—Greenland, Norland (formerly British America, British Columbia, and Alaska), Canada, the United States, Mexico, Central America, and the West Indies—were united under one confederated government, and had one flag, a modification of the banner of the dominant nation.

Day after day the experiments went on. Mr. Gibbs and his associates were extremely interested in what they were doing, but some of the rest of the party began to get a little tired of the monotony. There was absolutely nothing to see except water and sky, and although the temperature was frequently some degrees above freezing, and became sometimes quite pleasant as they gradually grew accustomed to the outer arctic atmosphere, those who had no particular occupation to divert their minds made frequent complaints of the cold. There were occasional snowstorms, but these did not last long, and as a rule the skies were clear.

"But think, Sarah," said Samuel Block, in answer to some of her complaints, "what it would be if this were winter, and, instead of being light all the time, it was dark, with the mercury 'way down at the bottom of the thermometer!"

"I don't intend to think of it at all," replied Sarah, sharply. "Do you suppose I am goin' to consent to stay here until the everlastin' night comes on? If that happened, I would simply stretch myself out and die. It's bad enough as it is, but when I look out on the sun, and think that it is the same sun that is shinin' on Sardis, and on the house which I hope we are goin' to have when we get back, I feel as if there was somethin' up here besides you, Sammy, that I'm accustomed to. If it was not for you and the sun, I could not get along at all; but if the sun's gone, I don't think you will be enough. I wish they would plant that corner-stone buoy and let us be off."

But by far the most dissatisfied person on board was the Pole Rovinski. He was chained to the floor in the hold, and could see nothing, nor could he find out anything. Sammy had explained his character and probable intentions to Captain Hubbell, who had thereupon delivered to Mr. Block a very severe lecture for not telling him before.

"If I've got a scoundrel on board I want to know it, and I hope this sort of thing won't happen again, Mr. Block."

"I don't see how it can," answered Sammy, "and I must admit I ought to have told you as soon as you took command. But people don't always do all they ought to do, and as for tellin' Mr. Gibbs, I would not do that, for his mind is rigged on a hair-spring balance, anyway—it wouldn't do to upset him."

"And what are we goin' to do with the feller?" said the captain. "Now that I know what this Pole is, I wish I had let him go down to the other pole and stay there."

"I thought so at first," said Sammy, "but I'm glad he didn't. I'd hate to think of our glorious pole with that thing floppin' on it."

At last all was ready to anchor the great buoy, and preparations were in progress for this important event, when everybody was startled by a shout from Mr. Marcy.

"Hello!" he cried. "What's that? A sail?"

"Where away?" shouted the captain.

"To the south," replied Mr. Marcy. And instantly everybody was looking in opposite directions. But Mr. Marcy's outstretched arm soon indicated to all the position of the cause of his outcry. It was a black spot clearly visible upon the surface of the sea, and apparently about two miles away. Quickly Captain Hubbell had his glass directed upon it, and the next moment he gave a loud cry.

"It's a whale!" he shouted. "There's whales in this polar sea!"

"I thought you said whales were extinct," cried Sammy.

"So I did," replied the captain. "And so they are in all Christian waters. Who ever could have imagined that we would have found 'em here?"

Sarah Block was so frightened when she found there was a whale in the same water in which the *Dipsey* floated that she immediately hurried below, with an indistinct idea of putting on her things. In such a case as this, it was time for her to leave. But soon recognizing the state of affairs, she sat down in a chair, threw a shawl over her head, and waited for the awful bump.

"Fortunately whales are soft," she said to herself, over and over again.

No one now thought of buoys. Every eye on deck was fixed upon the exposed back of the whale, and everybody speedily agreed that it was coming nearer to them. It did come nearer and nearer, and at one time it raised its head as if it were endeavoring to look over the water at the strange object which had come into those seas. Then suddenly it tossed its tail high into the air and sank out of sight.

"It's a right whale!" cried Captain Hubbell. "There's whales in this sea! Let's get through this buoy business and go cruisin' after 'em."

There was a great deal of excited talk about the appearance of the whale, but this was not allowed to interfere with the business in hand. A chain, not very heavy but of enormous strength, and of sufficient length to reach the bottom and give plenty of play, was attached to an anchor of a peculiar kind. It was very large and heavy, made of iron, and shaped something like a cuttlefish, with many arms which would cling to the bottom if any force were exerted to move the anchor. The other end of the chain was attached to the lower part of the buoy, and with powerful cranes the anchor was hoisted on deck. When everything had been made ready, the buoy, which had had the proper date cut upon it, was lowered into the water. Then the great anchor was dropped into the sea, as nearly as possible over the pole.

The sudden rush downward of the anchor and the chain caused the buoy to dip into the sea as if it were about to sink out of sight, but in a few moments it rose again, and the great sphere, half-way out of the water, floated proudly upon the surface of the polar sea.

Then came a great cheer, and Mrs. Block—who, having been assured that the whale had entirely disappeared, had come on deck—turned to her husband and remarked: "Now, Sammy, is there any earthly reason why we should not turn right around and go straight home? The pole's found, the place is marked, and what more is there for us to do?"

But before her husband could answer her, Captain

Hubbell lifted up his voice, which was full of spirit and enthusiasm.

"Messmates!" he cried, "we have touched at the pole, and we have anchored the buoy, and now let us go whalin'. It's thirty years since I saw one of them fish, and I never expected in all my born days I'd go a-whalin' ag'in."

The rest of the company on the *Dipsey* took no very great interest in the whaling cruise, but, on consultation with Mr. Clewe and Mrs. Raleigh at Sardis, it was decided that they ought by no means to leave the polar sea until they had explored it as thoroughly as circumstances would allow. Consequently the next day the *Dipsey* sailed away from the pole, leaving the buoy brightly floating on a gently rolling sea, its high-uplifted weather-vane glittering in the sun, with each of its ends always pointing bravely to the south.

CHAPTER XIV

A REGION OF NOTHINGNESS

IN the office of the works at Sardis, side by side at the table on which stood the telegraph instrument, Margaret Raleigh and Roland Clewe, receiving the daily reports from the *Dipsey*, had found themselves in such sympathy and harmony with the party they had sent out on this expedition that they, too, in fancy, had slowly groped their way under the grim overhanging ice out into the open polar sea. They, too, had stood on the deck of the vessel which had risen like a spectre out of the waters, and in the cold, clear atmosphere had gazed about them at this hitherto unknown part of the world. They had thrilled with enthusiastic excitement when the ring on the deck of the *Dipsey* was placed over the actual location of the pole; they had been filled with anger when they heard of the conduct of Rovinski; and their souls had swelled with a noble love of country and pride in their own achievements when they heard that they, by their representative, had made the north pole a part of their native land. They had listened, scarcely breathing, to the stirring account of the anchoring of the great buoy to one end of the earth's axis, and they had exclaimed in amazement at the announcement that, in the lonely waters of the pole, whales were still to be found, when they were totally unknown in every other portion of the earth.

But now the stirring events in the arctic regions which had so held and enthralled them day by day had, after a time, ceased. Mr. Gibbs was engaged in making experiments, observations, and explorations, the result of which he would embody in carefully prepared reports, and Sammy's daily message promised to be rather monotonous. Roland Clewe felt the great importance of a thorough exploration and examination of the polar sea. The vessel he had sent out had reached this hitherto inaccessible region, but it was not at all certain that another voyage, even of the same kind, would be successful. Consequently he advised those in charge of the expedition not to attempt to return until the results of their work were as complete as possible. Should the arctic night overtake them before they left the polar sea, this would not interfere with their return in the same manner in which they had gone north, for in a submarine voyage artificial light would be necessary at any season. So, for a time, Roland and Margaret withdrew, in a great measure, their thoughts from the vicinity of the pole, and devoted themselves to their work at home.

When Roland Clewe had penetrated with his Artesian ray as deeply into the earth beneath him as the photic power of his instrument would admit, he had applied all the available force of his establishment—the men working in relays day and night—to the manufacture of the instruments which should give increased power to the penetrating light which he hoped would make visible to him the interior structure of the earth, up to this time as unknown to man as had been the regions of the poles.

Roland had devoted a great deal of time to the arrangement of a system of reflectors, by which he hoped to make it possible to look down into the cylinder of light produced by the Artesian ray without projecting any portion of the body of the observer into the ray. This had been done principally to provide against the possibility of a shock to Margaret, such as he received when he beheld a man with the upper part of his body totally invisible, and a section of the other portion laid bare to the eye of a person standing in front of it. But his success had not been satisfactory. It was quite different to look directly down into that magical perforation at his feet, and to study the reflection of the same, indistinctly and uncertainly revealed by a system of mirrors.

Consequently the plan of reflectors was discarded, and Roland determined that the right thing to do was to take Margaret into his confidence and explain to her why he and she should not stand together and look down the course of the Artesian ray. She scolded him for not telling her all this before, and a permanent screen was erected around the spot on which the ray was intended to work, formed of Venetian blinds with fixed slats, so that the person inside could readily talk and consult with others outside without being seen by them.

As might well be supposed, this work with the "photic borer," as Clewe now called his instrument, was of absorbing interest. For a day or two after it was again put into operation, Margaret and Roland could scarcely tear themselves away from it long enough for necessary sleep and meals, and several persons connected with the works were frequently permitted to witness its wonderful operations.

Down, down descended that cylinder of light, until it had passed through all the known geological strata in that part of New Jersey, and had reached subterranean depths known to Clewe only by comparison and theory.

The apparent excavation had extended itself down so far that the disk at the bottom, although so brightly illuminated, was no longer clearly visible to the naked eye, and was rapidly decreasing in size on account of the perspective. But the telescopes which Clewe had provided easily overcame this difficulty. He was sure that it would be impossible for his light to penetrate to a depth which could not be made clearly visible by his telescopes.

It was a wonderful and weird sensation which came over those who stood, glass in hand, and gazed down the track of the Artesian ray. Far, far below them they saw that illuminated disk which revealed the character of the stratum which the light had reached. And yet, they could not see the telescope which they held in their hands; they could not see their hands; they knew that their heads and shoulders were invisible. All observers except Clewe kept well back from the edge of the frightful hole of light down which they peered; and once, when the weight of the telescope which she held had caused Margaret to make an involuntary step forward, she gave a fearful scream, for she was sure she was going to fall into the bowels of the earth. Clewe, who stood always near by, with his hand upon the lever which controlled the ray, instantly shut off the light; and although Margaret was thus convinced that she stood upon commonplace ground, she came from within the screen, and did not for some time recover from the nervous shock occasioned by this accident of the imagination.

Clewe himself took great pleasure in making experiments connected with the relation of the observer to the action of the Artesian ray. For instance, he found that when standing and gazing down into the great photic perforation below him, he could see into it quite as well when he shut his eyes as when they were open—the light passing through his head made his eyelids invisible. He stood in the very centre of the circle of light and looked down through himself.

That this application of light which he had discovered would be of the greatest possible service in surgery, Roland Clewe well knew. By totally eliminating from view any portion of the human body so as to expose a section of said body which it was desirable to examine, the interior structure of a patient could be studied as easily as the exterior, and a surgeon would be able to dissect a living being as easily as if the subject were a corpse. But Clewe did not now wish to make public the extraordinary adaptations of his discovery to the uses of the medical man and the surgeon. He was intent upon discovering, as far as was possible, the internal structure of the earth on which he dwelt, and he did not wish to interfere at present with this great and absorbing object by distracting his mind with any other application of his Artesian ray.

It is not intended to describe in detail the various stages of the progress of the Artesian ray into the subterranean regions. Sometimes it revealed strata colored red, yellow, or green by the presence of iron ore; sometimes it showed for a short distance a glittering disk, produced by the action of the light upon a deep-sunken reservoir of water; then it passed on, hour by hour, down, down into the eternal rocks.

When the Artesian ray had begun to work its way through the rocks, Margaret became less interested in observing its progress. Nothing new presented itself; it was one continual stony disk which she saw when she looked down into the shaft of light beneath her. Observation was becoming more and more difficult even to Roland Clewe, and at last he was obliged to set up a large telescope on a stand, and mount a ladder in order to use it.

Day after day the Artesian ray went downward, always revealing rock, rock, rock. The appliances for increased electric energy were working well, and Clewe was entirely satisfied with the operation of his photic borer.

One morning he came hurriedly to Margaret at her house, and announced, with glistening eyes, that his ray had now gone to a greater degree into the earth than man had ever yet reached.

"What have you found?" she asked excitedly.

"Rock upon rock," he answered. "This little State of ours rests on a firm foundation."

Although Roland Clewe found his observations rather monotonous work, he was regular and constant at his post, and gave little opportunity to his steadily progressing cylinder of light to reach and pass unseen anything which might be of interest.

It was nearly a week after he had announced to Margaret that he had seen deeper into the earth than any man before him that he mounted his ladder to take his final observation for the night. When he looked through his telescope, his eye was dazzled by a light which obliged him suddenly to close it and lift his head. At first he thought that he had reached the fabulous region of eternal fire, but this he knew to be absurd, and, besides, the light was not that of fire or heated substances. It was pale, colorless, and although dazzling at first, he found, when very cautiously he applied his eye again to the telescope, that it was not blinding—in fact, he could look at it as steadily as he could upon a clear sky.

But, gaze as he would, he could see nothing—nothing but light—subdued, soft, beautiful light. He knew the ray was passing steadily downward, for the mechanism was working with its accustomed regularity, but it revealed to him nothing at all. He could not understand it; his brain was dazed. He thought there might be something the matter with his eyesight. He got down from the ladder and hurriedly sent for Margaret, and when she came he begged her to look through the telescope and tell him what she saw. She went inside the screen, ascended the ladder, and looked down.

"It isn't anything," she called out presently. "It looks like lighter air. It can't be that. Perhaps there is something the matter with your telescope."

Clewe had thought of that, and as soon as she came out he examined the instrument. But the lenses were all right. There was nothing the matter with the telescope.

That night Roland Clewe spent in the lens-house, almost constantly at the telescope. But nothing did he see but a disk of soft, white light.

"The world can't be hollow!" he said to Margaret, the next morning. "It can't be filled with air, or nothing, and my ray would not illuminate air or nothing. I cannot understand it. If you did not see what I see, I should think I was going crazy."

"Don't talk that way!" exclaimed Margaret. "This may be some cavity which the ray will soon pass through, and then we shall come to the good old familiar rock again."

But Clewe could not be consoled in this way. He could see no reason why his ray, acting upon the emptiness of a cavern, should produce the effect he beheld. Moreover, if the ray had revealed a cavern of considerable extent, he could not expect that it could now pass through it, for the limit of its operations was almost reached. His electric cumulators would cease to act in a few hours more. The ray had now descended more than fourteen miles—its limit was fifteen.

Margaret was greatly troubled because of the effect of this result of the photic borer upon Roland. His disappointment was very great, and it showed itself in his face. His Artesian ray had gone down to a distance greater than had been sometimes estimated as the thickness of the earth's crust, and the result was of no value. Roland did not believe that the earth had a crust. He had no faith in the old-fashioned idea that the great central portion was a mass of molten matter, but he could not drive from his mind the conviction that his light had passed through the solid portion of the earth, and had emerged into something which was not solid, which was not liquid—which was, in fact, nothing.

All his labors had come to this: he had discovered that the various strata near the earth's surface rested upon a vast bed of rock, and that this bed of rock rested upon nothing. Of course, it was not impossible that the arrangement of the substances which make up this globe was peculiar at this point, and that there was a great cavern fourteen miles below him; but why should such a cavern be filled with a light different from that which would be shown by his Artesian ray when shining upon any other substances, open air or solid matter?

He could go no deeper down—at least, at present. If he could make an instrument of increased power, it would require many months to do it.

"But I will do it," said he to Margaret. "If this is a cavern, and if it has a bottom, I will reach it. I will go on and see what there is beyond. On such a discovery as I have made one can pass no conclusion whatever. If I cannot go farther, I need not have gone down at all."

"No," said Margaret, "I don't want you to go on—at least, at present. You must wait. The earth will wait, and I want you to be in a condition to be able to wait also. You must now stop this work altogether. Stop doing anything. Stop thinking about it. After a time—say early in winter—we can recommence operations with the Artesian ray—that is, if we think well to do so. You should stop this and take up something else. You have several enterprises which are very important and ought to be carried on. Take up one of them, and think no more for a few months of the nothingness which is fourteen miles below us."

It was not difficult for Roland Clewe to convince himself that this was very good advice. He resolved to shut up his lens-house entirely for a time, and to think no more of the great work he had done within it, but apply himself to something which he had long neglected, and which would be a distraction and a recreation to his disappointed mind.

CHAPTER XV

THE AUTOMATIC SHELL

In a large building, not far from the lens-house in which Roland Clewe had pursued the experiments which had come to such a disappointing conclusion, there was a piece of mechanism which interested its inventor more than any other of his works, excepting, of course, the photic borer.

This was an enormous projectile, the peculiarity of which was that its motive power was contained within itself, very much as a rocket contains the explosives which send it upward. It differed, however, from the rocket or any other similar projectile, and many of its features were entirely original with Roland Clewe.

This extraordinary piece of mechanism, which was called the automatic shell, was of cylindrical form, eighteen feet in length and four feet in diameter. The forward end was conical and not solid, being formed of a number of flat steel rings, decreasing in size as they approached the point of the cone. When not in operation these rings did not touch one another, but they could be forced together by pressure on the point of the cone. This shell might contain explosives, or not, as might be considered desirable, and it was not intended to fire it from a cannon, but to start it on its course from a long semicylindrical trough, which would be used simply to give it the desired direction. After it had been started by a ram worked by an engine at the rear end of the trough, it immediately began to propel itself by means of the mechanism contained within it.

But the great value of this shell lay in the fact that the moment it encountered a solid substance or obstruction of any kind, its propelling power became increased. The rings which formed the cone on its forward end were pressed together, the electric motive power was increased in proportion to the pressure, and thus the greater the resistance to this projectile, the greater became its velocity and power of progression, and its onward course continued until its self-contained force had been exhausted.

The power of explosives had reached, at this period, to so high a point that it was unnecessary to devise any increase in their enormous energy, and the only problems before the students of artillery practice related to methods of getting their projectiles to the points desired. Progress in this branch of the science had proceeded so far that an attack upon a fortified port by armored vessels was now considered as a thing of the past, and although there had been no naval wars of late years, it was believed that never again would there be a combat between ironclads, wooden vessels being preferable.

The recently invented magnetic shell made artillery practice against all vessels of steel a mere mechanical process, demanding no skill whatever. When one of these magnetic shells was thrown anywhere in the vicinity of an iron ship, the powerful magnetism developed within it instantly attracted it to the vessel, which was destroyed by the ensuing contact and explosion. Two ironclads meeting on the ocean need to fire but one shell each to be both destroyed. The inability of iron battle-ships to withstand this improvement in artillery had already set the naval architects of the world upon the work of constructing war-ships which would not attract the magnetic shell, —which was effective even when laid on the bottoms of harbors,—and Roland Clewe had been engaged in making plans and experiments for the construction of a paper man-of-war, which he believed would meet the requirements of the situation.

When Clewe determined to follow Margaret Raleigh's advice and give up for a time his work with the Artesian ray, his thoughts naturally turned to his automatic shell. Work upon this invention was now almost completed, but the great difficulty which its inventor expected to meet with was that of inducing his government to make a trial of it. Such a trial would be extremely expensive, involving probably the destruction of the shell, and he did not feel able or willing to experiment with it without governmental aid.

The shell was intended for use on land as well as at sea, against cities and great fortified structures, and Clewe believed that the automatic shell might be brought within fifty miles of a city, set up with its trough and ram, and projected in a level line toward its object, to which it would impel itself with irresistible power and velocity, through forests, hills, buildings, and everything, gaining strength from every opposition which stood in the direct line of its progress. Attacking fortifications from the sea, the vessel carrying this great projectile could operate at a distance beyond the reach of the magnetic shell.

Now that the automatic shell itself was finished, and nothing remained to be done but to complete the great steel trough in which it would lie, Roland Clewe found himself confronted with a business which was very hard and very distasteful to him. He must induce other people to do what he was not able to do himself. Unless his shell was put to a practical trial, it could be of no value to the world or to himself.

In one of the many conversations on the subject, Margaret had suggested something which rapidly grew and developed in Roland's mind.

"It would be an admirable thing to tunnel mountains with," said she,—"of course, I mean a large one, as thick through as a tunnel ought to be."

In less than a day Clewe had perfected an idea which he believed might be of practical service. For some time there had been talk of a new railroad in this part of the State, but one of the difficulties in the way was the necessity of making a tunnel or a deep cut through a small mountain. To go round this mountain would be objectionable for many reasons, and to go through it would be enormously expensive. Clewe knew the country well, and his soul glowed within him as he thought that here, perhaps, was an opportunity for him to demonstrate the value of his invention, not only as an agent in warfare, but as a wonderful assistant in the peaceful progress of the world.

There was no reason why such shells should not be constructed for the express purpose of making tunnels. Nothing could be better adapted for an experiment of this kind than the low mountain in question. If the shell passed through it at the desired point, there would be nothing beyond which could be injured, and it would then enter the end of a small chain of mountains, and might pass onward as far as its motive power would carry it, without doing any damage whatever. Moreover, its course could be followed, and it could be recovered.

Both Roland and Margaret were very enthusiastic in favor of this trial of the automatic shell, and they determined that if the railroad company would pay them a fair price if they should succeed in tunnelling the mountain, they would charge nothing should their experiment be a failure. Of course, the tunnel the shell would make, if everything worked properly, would not be large enough for any practical use ; but explosives might be placed along its length, which, if desired, would blow out that portion of the mountain which lay immediately above the tunnel, and this great cut could readily be enlarged to any desired dimensions.

Clewe would have gone immediately to confer with the secretary of the railroad company, with whom he was acquainted, but that gentleman was at the seaside, and the business was necessarily postponed.

"Now," said Clewe to Margaret, "if I could do it, I'd like to take a run up to the polar sea, and see for myself what they have discovered. Judging from Sammy's infrequent despatches, the party in general must be getting a little tired of Mr. Gibbs's experiments and soundings; but I should be intensely interested in them."

"I don't wonder," answered Margaret, "that they are getting tired. They have found the pole, and they want to come home. That is natural enough. But, for my part, I am very glad we can't run up there. Even if we had another *Dipsey*, I should decidedly oppose it. I might agree that we should go to Cape Tariff, but I would not agree to anything more. You may discover poles if you want to, but you must do it by proxy."

At this moment an awful crash was heard. It came from the building containing the automatic shell. Clewe and Margaret started to their feet. They glanced at each other, and then both ran from the office at the top of their speed. Other people were running from various parts of the works. There was no smoke, there was no dust. There had been no explosion, as Clewe had feared in his first alarm.

When they entered the building, Clewe and Margaret stood aghast. There were workmen shouting or standing with open mouths; others were running in. The massive scaffolding, twenty feet in height, on which the shell had been raised so that the steel trough might be run under it, lay in splinters upon the ground. The great automatic shell itself had entirely disappeared.

For some moments no one said anything. All stood astounded, looking at the space where the shell had been. Then Clewe hurried forward. In the ground, amid the wreck of the scaffolding, was a circular hole about four feet in diameter. Clasping the hand of a man near him, he cautiously peered over the edge and looked down. It was dark and deep. He saw nothing.

Roland Clewe stepped back. He put his hands over his eyes and thought. Now he comprehended everything clearly. The weight of the shell had been too great for its supports. The forward part, which contained the propelling mechanism, was much heavier than the other end, and had gone down first, so that the shell had turned over and had fallen perpendicularly, striking the ground with the point of the cone. Then its tremendous propelling energy, infinitely more powerful than any dynamic force dreamed of in the preceding century, was instantly generated. The inconceivably rapid motion which forced it forward like a screw must have then commenced, and it had bored itself down deep into the solid earth.

"Roland dear," said Margaret, stepping quietly up to him, tears on her pale countenance, "don't you think it can be hoisted up again?"

"I hope not," said he.

"Why do you say that?" she asked, astonished.

"Because," he answered, "if it has not penetrated far enough into the earth to make it utterly out of our power to get it again, the thing is a failure."

"More than that," thought Margaret, "if it has gone down entirely out of our reach, the thing is a failure all the same, for I don't believe he can ever be induced to make another."

CHAPTER XVI

THE TRACK OF THE SHELL

DURING the course of his inventive life Roland Clewe had become accustomed to disappointments. He was very much afraid, indeed, that he was beginning to expect them. If that really happened, there would be an end to his career.

But when he spoke in this way to Margaret, she almost scolded him.

"How utterly absurd it is," she said, "for a man, who has just discovered the north pole, to sit down in an arm-chair and talk in that way!"

"I didn't discover it," he said. "It was Sammy and Gibbs who found the pole. As for me—I don't suppose I shall ever see it."

"I am not so sure of that," she said. "We may yet invent a telescope which shall curve its reflected rays over the rotundity of the earth and above the highest icebergs, so that you and I may sit here and look at the waters of the pole gently splashing around the great buoy."

"And charge a dollar apiece to all other people who would like to look at the pole, and so we would make much money," said he. "But I must really go and do something. I shall go crazy if I sit here idle."

Margaret knew that the loss of the shell was the greatest blow that Roland had ever yet received. His ambitions as a scientific inventor were varied, but she was well aware that for some years he had considered it of great importance to do something which would bring him in money enough to go on with his investigations and labors without depending entirely upon her for the necessary capital. If he could have tunnelled a mountain with this shell, or if he had but partially succeeded in so doing, money would have come to him. He would have made his first pecuniary success of any importance.

"What are you going to do, Roland?" said she, as he rose to leave the room.

"I am going to find the depth of the hole that shell has made. It ought to be filled up, and I must calculate how many loads of earth and stones it will take to do it."

That afternoon he came to Mrs. Raleigh's house.

"Margaret," he exclaimed, "I have lowered a lead into that hole with all the line attached which we have got on the place, and we can touch no bottom! I have telegraphed for a lot of sounding-wire, and I must wait until it arrives before I do anything more."

"You must be very, very careful, Roland, when you are doing that work," said Margaret. "Suppose you should fall in!"

"I have provided against that," said he. "I have laid a floor over the hole, with only a small opening in it, so there is no danger. And another curious thing I must tell you: our line is not wet—we have struck no water!"

When Margaret visited the works the next day, she found Roland Clewe and a number of workmen surrounding the flooring which had been laid over the hole. They were sounding with a windlass which carried an immense reel of wire. The wire was extremely thin, but the weight of that portion of it which had already been unwound was so great that four men were at the brakes of the windlass.

Roland came to meet Margaret as she entered.

"The lead has gone down six miles," he said, in a low voice, "and we have not touched the bottom yet."

"Impossible!" she cried. "Roland, it cannot be! The wire must be coiling itself up somewhere. It is incredible! The lead cannot have gone down so far!"

"Leads have gone down as far as that before this," said he. "Soundings of more than six miles have been obtained at sea."

She went with him and stood near the windlass. For an hour she remained by his side, and still the reel turned steadily and the wire descended into the hole.

"Will you surely know when it gets to the bottom?" said she.

"Yes," he answered. "When the electric button under the lead touches anything solid, or even anything fluid, this bell up here will ring."

She stayed until she could stay no longer. She knew it would be of no use to urge Roland to leave the windlass. Very early the next morning a note was brought to her before she was up, and on it was written:

"We have touched bottom at a depth of fourteen and an eighth miles."

When Roland came to Mrs. Raleigh's house, about nine o'clock that morning, his face was pale and his whole form trembled.

"Margaret," he cried, "what are we going to do about it? It is wonderful! I cannot appreciate it. I have had all the men up in the office this morning, and pledged them to secrecy. Of course, they won't keep their promises, but it was all that I could do. I can think of no particular damage which would come to me if this thing were known, but I cannot bear that the public should get hold of it until I know something myself. Margaret, I don't know anything!"

"Have you had your breakfast?" she asked.

"No," he said, " I haven't thought of it."

"Did you eat anything last night?"

"I don't remember," he answered.

"Now, I want you to come into the dining-room," said she. "I had a light breakfast some time ago, and I am going to eat another with you. I want you to tell me something. There was a man here the other day with a patent machine for making buttonholes,—you know, the old-fashioned buttonholes are coming in again,—and if this is a good invention it ought to sell, for nearly everybody has forgotten how to make buttonholes in the old way."

"Oh, nonsense!" said Roland. "How can you talk of such things? I can't take my mind—"

"I know you can't," she interrupted. "You are all the time thinking of that everlasting old hole in the ground. Well, I am tired of it. Do let us talk of something else."

Margaret Raleigh was much more than tired of that phenomenal hole in the earth which had been made by the automatic shell: she was frightened by it. It was something terrible to her. She had scarcely slept that night, and she needed breakfast and change of thought as much as Roland did.

But it was not long before she found that it was impossible to turn his thoughts from that all-absorbing subject. All she could do was to endeavor to guide them into quiet channels.

"What are you going to do this morning?" she asked, toward the close of the breakfast.

"I am going to try to take the temperature of that shaft at various points," said he.

"That will be an excellent thing," she answered. "You may make valuable discoveries. But I should think the heat at that great depth would be enough to melt your thermometers."

"It did not melt my lead or my sounding-wire," said he. And as he said these words her heart fell.

The temperature of this great perforation was taken at many points, and when Roland brought to Margaret the statement of the height of the mercury at the very bottom, she was astounded and shocked to find that it was only eighty-three degrees.

"This is terrible!" she ejaculated.

"What do you mean?" he asked in surprise. "That is not hot. Why, it is only summer weather."

But she did not think it terrible because it was so hot. The fact that it was so cool had shocked her. In such temperature one could live! A great source of trust and hope had been taken from her.

"Roland," she said, sinking into a chair, "I don't understand this at all. I always thought that it became hotter and hotter as one went down into the earth, and I once read that at twenty miles below the surface, if the heat increased in proportion as it increased in a mine, the temperature must be over a thousand degrees Fahrenheit. Your instrument could not have registered properly. Perhaps it never went all the way down, and perhaps it is all a mistake. It may be that the lead did not go down so far as you think."

He smiled. He was becoming calmer now, for he was doing something: he was obtaining results.

"Those ideas about increasing heat at increasing depths are old-fashioned, Margaret," he said. "Recent science has given us better theories. It is known that there is great heat in the interior of the earth, and it is also known that the transmission of this heat toward the surface depends upon the conductivity of the rocks in particular locations. In some places the heat comes very near the surface, and in others it is very, very far down. More than that, the temperature may rise as we go down into the earth, and afterwards fall again. There may be a stratum of close-grained rock, possibly containing metal, coming up from the interior in an oblique direction and bringing the heat toward the surface. Then below that there may be vast regions of other rocks which do not readily conduct heat, and which do not originate in heated portions of the earth's interior. When we reach these, we must find the temperature lower, as a matter of course. Now, I have really done this. A little over five miles down my thermometer registered ninety-one, and after that it began to fall a little. But the rocks under us are poor conductors of heat, and, moreover, it is highly probable that they have no near communication with the source of internal heat."

"I thought these things were more exact and regular," said she. "I supposed, if you went down a mile in one place, you would find it as hot as you would in another."

"Oh, no," said he. "There is nothing regular or exact in nature. Even our earth is not a perfect sphere. Nature is never mathematically correct. You must always allow for variations. In some parts of the earth its heated core, or whatever it is, must be very, very far down."

At this moment a happy thought struck Margaret.

"How easy it would be, Roland, for you to examine this great hole! I can do it—anybody can do it. It's perfectly amazing, when you think of it. All you have to do is to take your Artesian-ray machine into that building and set it over the hole; then you can light the whole interior, all the way down to the bottom, and with a telescope you can see everything that is in it."

"Yes," said he. "But I think I can do it better than that. It would be very difficult to transfer the photic borer to the other building, and I can light up the interior perfectly well by means of electric lights. I can even lower a camera down to the very bottom and take photographs of the interior."

"Why, that would be perfectly glorious!" cried Margaret, springing to her feet, an immense relief coming to her mind with the thought that to examine this actual shaft it would not be necessary for anybody to go down into it.

"I should go to work at that immediately," said he, "but I must have a different sort of windlass—one that shall be moved by an engine. I will rig up the big telescope, too, so that we can look down when we have lighted up the bottom."

It required days to do all that Roland Clewe had planned. A great deal of the necessary work was done in his own establishment, and much machinery besides was sent from New York. When all was ready, many experiments were made with the electric lights and camera, and photographs of inexpressible value and interest were taken at various points on the sides of this wonderful perpendicular tunnel.

At last Clewe was prepared to photograph the lower portion of the shaft. With a peculiar camera and a powerful light, five photographs were taken of the very bottom of the great shaft—four in horizontal directions, and one immediately below the camera. When these photographs were printed by the improved methods then in vogue, Clewe seized the pictures and examined them with eager haste. For some moments he stood silent, his eyes fixed upon the photographs as if there were nothing else in this world. But all he saw on each was an irregular patch of light. He thrust the prints aside, and in a loud, sharp voice he gave orders to bring the great telescope and set it up above the hole. The light was still at the bottom, and the instant the telescope was in position, Clewe mounted the step-ladder and directed the instrument downward. In a few moments he gave an exclamation, and then he came down from the ladder so rapidly that he barely missed falling. He went into his office and sent for Margaret. When she came he showed her the photographs.

"See!" he said. "What I have found is nothing.

Even a camera shows nothing, and when I look down through the glass I see nothing. It is just what the Artesian ray showed me. It is nothing at all!"

"I should think," said she, speaking very slowly, "that if your sounding-lead had gone down into nothing, it would have continued to go down indefinitely. What was there to stop it if there is nothing there?"

"Margaret," said he, "I don't know anything about it. That is the crushing truth. I can find out nothing at all. When I look down through the earth by means of the Artesian ray, I reach a certain depth and then I see a void. When I look down through a perfectly open passage to the same depth, I still see a void."

"But, Roland," said Margaret, holding in her hand the view taken of the bottom of the shaft, "what is this in the middle of the proof? It is darker than the rest, but it seems to be all covered up with mistiness. Have you a magnifying-glass?"

Roland found a glass, and seized the photograph. He actually forgot his usual courtesy.

"Margaret," he cried, "that dark thing is my automatic shell! It is lying on its side. I can see the greater part of it. It is not in the hole it made itself; it is in a cavity. It has turned over, and lies horizontally. It has bored down into a cave, Margaret—into a cave—a cave with a solid bottom—a cave made of light!"

"Nonsense!" said Margaret. "Caves cannot be made of light. The light that you see comes from your electric lamp."

"Not at all!" he cried. "If there was anything there, the light of my lamp would show it. Through the whole depth of the shaft the light showed everything and the camera showed everything. You can see the very texture of the rocks. But when the camera goes to the bottom, when it enters this space into which the shaft plainly leads, it shows nothing at all, except what I may be said to have put there. I see only my great shell, surrounded by light, resting on light!"

"Roland," said Margaret, "you are crazy! Perhaps it is water which fills that cave, or whatever it is."

"Not at all," said Roland. "It presents no appearance of water, and when the camera came up it was not wet. No, it is a cave of light."

He sat for some minutes silently gazing out of the window. Margaret drew her chair closer to him. She took one of his hands in both of hers.

"Look at me, Roland!" she said. "What are you thinking about?"

He turned his face upon her, but said nothing. She looked straight into his eyes, and she needed no Artesian ray to enable her to see through them into his innermost brain. She saw what was filling that brain. It was one great, overpowering desire to go down to the bottom of that hole, to find out what it was that he had discovered.

"Margaret, you hurt me!" he exclaimed suddenly. In the intensity of the emotion excited by what she had discovered, her finger-nails had nearly penetrated through his skin. She had felt as if she would hold him and hold him forever, but she released his hand.

"We haven't talked about that buttonhole-machine," she said. "I want your opinion of it."

To her surprise, Roland began immediately to discuss the new invention of which she had spoken, and asked her to describe it. He was not at all anxious now to tell Margaret what he was thinking of in connection with the track of the shell.

CHAPTER XVII

CAPTAIN HUBBELL DECLINES TO GO WHALING

THE most impatient person on board the *Dipsey* was Captain Jim Hubbell. Sarah Block was also very anxious to go home as soon as matters could be arranged for the return journey, and she talked a great deal of the terrible fate which would be sure to overtake them if they should be so unfortunate as to stay until the season of the arctic night. But, after all, she was not as impatient as Captain Hubbell. She simply wanted to go home; but he not only greatly desired to return to his wife and family, but he wanted to do something else before he started south: he wanted to go whaling. He considered himself the only man in the whole world who had a chance to go whaling, and he chafed as he thought of the hindrances which Mr. Gibbs was continually placing in the way of this, the grandest of all sports.

Mr. Gibbs was a mild man, and rather a quiet one, but he thoroughly understood the importance of the investigations he was pursuing in the polar sea, and placed full value upon the opportunity which had come to him of examining the wonders of a region hitherto locked up from civilized man. Captain Hubbell was astonished to find that Mr. Gibbs was as hard and unyielding as an iceberg during his explorations and soundings. It was of no use to talk to him of whaling. He had work before him, and he must do it.

But the time came when Mr. Gibbs relented. The *Dipsey* had sailed around the whole boundary of the polar sea; observations, surveys, and maps had been made, and the general geography of the region had been fairly well determined. There still remained some weeks of the arctic day, and it was desirable that they should begin their return journey during that time, so Mr. Gibbs informed Captain Jim that if he wanted to do a little whaling, he would like him to lose no time.

Almost from the time of their arrival in the polar sea, the subject of whales had greatly interested everybody on the *Dipsey.* Even Rovinski, who had been released from his confinement after a few days, because he had really committed no actual crime except that of indulging in overleaping ambition, had spent every available minute of leisure in looking for whales. It was strange that nothing in this Northern region interested the people on the *Dipsey* (with the sole exception of Mr. Gibbs) so much as these great fish, which seemed to be the only visible inhabitants of the polar solitudes. There were probably white bears somewhere on the icy shores about them, but they never showed themselves, and if birds were there, they did not fly over that sea.

There was reason to suppose that there were a good many whales in the polar sea. Wherever our party sailed, lay to, or anchored for a time, they were very sure, before long, to see a whale curving his shining black back into the light, or sending two beautiful jets of water up into the air. Whenever a whale was seen, somebody on board was sure to remark that these creatures in this part of the world seemed to be very tame. It was not at all uncommon to see one disport himself at no great distance from the vessel for an hour or more.

"If I could get among a school of whales anywhere around Nantucket, and find 'em as tame as these fellers," said Captain Jim, "I'd give a boom to the whale-oil business that it hasn't had for forty years."

But not long before Mr. Gibbs told the captain that he might go whaling if he felt like it, the old sailor had experienced a change of mind. He had become a most ardent student of whales. In his very circumscribed experience when a young man he had seen whales, but they had generally been a long way off, and as the old-fashioned method of rowing after them in boats had even then been abandoned in favor of killing them by means of the rifled cannon, Captain Hubbell had not seen very much of these creatures until they had been towed alongside. But now he could study whales at his leisure. It was seldom that he had to wait very long before he would see one near enough for him to examine it with a glass, and he never failed to avail himself of such opportunities.

The consequence of this constant and careful inspection was the conclusion, in Captain Hubbell's mind, that there was only one whale in the polar sea. He had noticed, and others had noticed, that they never saw two at once, and the captain had used his glass so often and so well that one morning he stamped his foot upon the deck and said to Sammy:

"I believe that's the same whale over and over and over ag'in. I know him like a book. He has his ways and his manners, and it isn't reasonable to suppose that every whale has the same ways and manners. He comes just so near the vessel, and then he stops and blows. Then he suns his back for a while, and then he throws up his flukes and sounds. He does that as regular as if he was a polar clock. I know the very shape of his flukes, and two or three days ago, as he was soundin', I thought that the tip of the upper one looked as if it had been damaged—as if he had broken it floppin' about in some tight place; and ever since, when I have seen a whale, I have looked for the tip of that upper fluke, and there's that same old break. Every time I have looked I have found it. It can't be that there are a lot o' whales in here, and each one of 'em with a battered fluke."

"That does look sort o' queer," said Sammy, reflectively.

"Sammy Block," said Captain Jim, impressively, "it's my opinion that there's only one whale in this here polar sea; and, more than that, it's my opinion that there's only one whale in this world, and that that feller we've seen is the one! Samuel Block, he's the last whale in the whole world! Now, you know that I wanted to go a-whalin'—that's natural enough. But since Mr. Gibbs has got through, and has said that I could take this vessel an' go a-whalin' if I wanted to, —which would be easy enough, for we have got guns aboard which would kill any right whale,—I don't want to go. I don't want to lay on my dyin' bed and think that I'm the man that killed the last whale in the world. I'm commandin' this vessel, and I sail it wherever Mr. Gibbs tells me to sail it; but if he wants the bones of a whale to take home as a curiosity, and tells me to sail this vessel after that whale, I won't do it."

"I'm with you there," said Sammy. "I have been thinkin' while you was talkin', and it's my opinion that it's not only the last whale in the world, but it's purty nigh tame. I believe it's so glad to see some other movin' creature in this lonely sea that it wants to keep company with us all the time. No, sir, I wouldn't have anything to do with killin' that fish!"

The opinions of the captain and Sammy were now communicated to the rest of the company on board, and nearly all of them thought that they had had such an idea themselves. The whale certainly looked very familiar every time he showed himself.

To Mr. Gibbs this lonely creature, if he were such, now became an object of intense interest. It was evidently a specimen of the right whale, once common in the Northern seas, skeletons of which could be seen in many museums. Nothing would be gained to science by his capture, and Mr. Gibbs agreed with the others that it would be a pity to harm this, the last of his race.

In thinking and talking over the matter Mr. Gibbs formed a theory which he thought would explain the presence of this solitary whale in the polar sea. He thought it very likely that it had gotten under the ice and had pursued its northern journey very much as the *Dipsey* had pursued hers, and had at last emerged, as she had, into the polar sea at a place perhaps as shallow as that where the submarine vessel came out from under the ice.

"And if that's the case," said Captain Hubbell, "it is ten to one that he has not been able to get out again, and has found himself here caught just as if he was in a trap. Fishes don't like to swim into tight places. They may do it once, but they don't want to do it again. It is this disposition that makes 'em easy to catch in traps. I believe you are right, Mr. Gibbs. I believe this whale has got in here and can't get out—or, at least, he thinks he can't. And nobody knows how long it's been since he first got in. It may have been a hundred years ago. There's plenty o' little fish in these waters for him to eat, and he's the only one there is to feed."

The thought that in this polar sea with themselves was a great whale, which was probably here simply because he could not get out, had a depressing effect upon the minds of the party on the *Dipsey*. There was perhaps no real reason why they should fear the fate of the great fish, but, after all, this subject was one which should be very seriously considered. The latter part of their passage under the ice had been very hazardous. Had they struck a sharp rock below them, or had they been pierced by a jagged mass of ice above them, there probably would have been a speedy end of the expedition, and now, having come safely out of that dangerous shallow water, they shrank from going into it again.

It was the general opinion that if they would sail a considerable distance to the eastward they could not fail to find a deep channel by which the waters of this sea communicated with Baffin Bay, but in this case they would be obliged to leave the line of longitude by which they had safely travelled from Cape Tariff to the pole, and seek another route southward, along some other line, which would end their journey they knew not where.

"I am cold," said Sarah Block. "At first I got along all right, with all these furs, and goin' down-stairs every time I felt chilly, but the freezin' air is beginnin' to go into my very bones like needles; and if winter is comin' on, and it's goin' to be worse than this, New Jersey is the place for me. But there's one thing that chills my blood clammier than even the cold weather, and that is the thought of that whale follerin' us. If we get down into those shaller places under the ice, and he takes it into his head to come along, he'll be worse than a bull in a china shop. I don't mean to say that I think he'll want to do us any harm, for he has never showed any sign of such a feelin', but if he takes to bouncin' and thrashin' when he scratches himself on any rocks, it'll be a bad box for us to be in."

None of the others shared these special fears of Mrs. Block, but they were all as much disinclined as she was to begin another submarine voyage in the shallow waters which they had been so glad to leave.

It was believed, from the general contour of the surrounding region, that if the ice were all melted away it would be seen that a cape projected from the American continent eastward at the point where they had entered the polar sea, and that it was in crossing the submerged continuation of this cape that they had found the shallow water. Beyond and southward they knew that the water was deep and safe. If they could reach that portion of the sea without crossing the shallow point, they would have no fears regarding their return voyage. They knew how far south it was that that deep water lay, and the questions before them related to the best means of reaching it.

At a general council of officers, Sammy and Captain Hubbell both declared that they were not willing to take any other path homeward except one which led along the seventieth line of longitude. That had brought them safely up, and it would take them safely down. If they went under the ice at some point eastward, how were they to find the seventieth line of longitude? They could not take observations down there, and they might have to go south on some other line, which would take them nobody knew where. Mr. Gibbs said little, but he believed that it would be well to go back the way they came.

At last a plan was proposed by Mr. Marcy, and adopted without dissent. The whole country which lay in the direction they wished to travel seemed to be an immense plain of ice and snow, with mountains looming up toward the west and in the far southeast. In places great slabs of ice seemed to be piled up into craggy masses, but in general the surface of the country was quite level, indicating underlying water. In fact, a little east of the point where they had entered the polar sea, great cracks and reefs, some of them extending nearly a mile inward, broke up the shore-line. The party on the *Dipsey* were fully able to travel over smooth ice and frozen snow, for this contingency had been thought of and provided for. But to take the *Dipsey* on an overland journey would, of course, be impossible. By Mr. Marcy's plan, however, it was thought that it would be quite feasible for the *Dipsey* to sail inland until she had reached a point where they were sure the deep sea lay serenely beneath the ice around them.

CHAPTER XVIII

MR. MARCY'S CANAL

THE twelve men and the one woman on board the *Dipsey*, now lying at anchor in the polar sea, were filled with a warming and cheering ardor as they began their preparations for the homeward journey, although these preparations included what was to all of them a very painful piece of work. It was found that it would be absolutely necessary to disengage themselves from the electric cord which, in all their voyaging in these desolate arctic regions, under water and above water, had connected them with the works of Roland Clewe at Sardis, New Jersey. A sufficient length of this cord, almost too slight to be called a cable, to reach from Cape Tariff to the pole, with a margin adequate for all probable emergencies, had been placed on board the *Dipsey*, and it was expected that on her return these slender but immensely strong wires would be wound up, instead of being let out, and so still connect the vessel with Mr. Clewe's office.

But the *Dipsey* had sailed in such devious ways and in so many directions that she had laid a great deal of the cable upon the bottom of the polar sea, and it would be difficult, or perhaps impossible, to sail back over her previous tracks and take it up again, and there was not enough of it left for her to proceed southward very far and still keep up her telegraphic communication. Consequently it was considered best, upon starting southward, that they should cut loose from all connection with their friends and the rest of the world. They would have to do this anyway in a short time. If they left the end of the wire in some suitable position on the coast of the polar sea, it might prove of subsequent advantage to science, whereas if they cut loose when they were submerged in the ocean, this cable from Cape Tariff to the pole must always be absolutely valueless. It was, therefore, determined to build a little house, for which they had the material, and place therein a telegraph instrument connected with the wire, and provided with one of the Collison batteries, which would remain in working order with a charge sufficient to last for forty years, and this, with a ground-wire run down through the ice to the solid earth, might make telegraphic communication possible to some subsequent visitor to the pole.

But, apart from the necessity of giving up connection with Sardis, the journey did not seem like such a strange and solemn progress through unknown regions as the Northern voyage had been. If they could get themselves well down into the deep sea at a point on the seventieth line of longitude, they would sail directly south, with every confidence of emerging safely into Baffin Bay.

The latest telegrams between Sardis and the polar sea were composed mostly of messages of the warmest friendship and encouragement. If Mr. Clewe and Mrs. Raleigh felt any fears as to the success of the first part of the return journey, they showed no signs of them, and Sammy never made any reference to his wife's frequently expressed opinion that there was good reason to believe that the end of this thing would be that the *Dipsey*, with everybody on board of her, would suddenly, by one of those mishaps which nobody can prevent, be blown into fine dust.

Mr. Marcy's plan was a very simple one. The *Dipsey* carried a great store of explosive appliances of various patterns and of the most improved kinds, some of them of immense power, and Mr. Marcy proposed that a long line of these should be laid over the level ice and then exploded. The ice below them would be shivered into atoms, and he believed that an open channel might thus be made, through which the *Dipsey* might easily proceed. Then another line of explosives would be laid ahead of the vessel, and the length of the canal increased. This would be a slow method of proceeding, but it was considered a sure one.

As to the progress over the snow and ice of those who were to lay the lines of shells, that would be easy enough. It had been supposed that it might be necessary for the party to make overland trips, and for this purpose twenty or more electric-motor sledges had been provided. These sledges were far superior to any drawn by dogs or reindeer. Each one of them, mounted on broad runners of aluminium, was provided with a small engine, charged at the vessel with electricity enough to last a week, and was propelled by means of a light metal wheel with sharp points upon its outer rim. This wheel was under the fore part of the sledge, and revolving rapidly, its points caught in the ice or frozen snow and propelled the sledge at a good rate of speed. The wheel could be raised or lowered, so that its points should take more or less hold of the ice, according as circumstances demanded. In descending a declivity it could be raised entirely, so that the person on the sledge might coast, and it could at any time be brought down hard to act as a brake.

As soon as it was possible to get everything in order, a party of six men, on electric sledges, headed by Mr. Marcy, started southward over the level ice, carrying with them a number of shells, which were placed in a long line, and connected by an electric wire with the *Dipsey*. When the party had returned and the shells were exploded, the most sanguine anticipations of Mr. Marcy were realized. A magnificent canal three miles long lay open to the south.

Now the anchor of the *Dipsey* was weighed, and our party bade farewell to the polar sea. The great ball buoy, with its tall pole and weather-vane, floated proudly over the northern end of the earth's axis. The little telegraph-house was all in order, and made as secure as possible, and under it the *Dipsey* people placed a store of provisions, leaving a note in several languages to show what they had done.

"If the whale wants to come ashore to get somethin' to eat and send a message, why, here's his chance!" said Sammy. "But it strikes me that if any human beings ever reach this pole again, they won't come the way we came, and they'll not see this little house, for it won't take many snow-storms—even if they are no worse than some of those we have seen—to cover it up out o' sight."

"I don't believe the slightest good will ever result on account of leaving this instrument here," said Mr. Gibbs, "but it seemed the right thing to do, and I would not be satisfied to go away and leave the useless end of the cable in these regions. We will set up the highest rod we have by the little house, and then we can do no more."

When the *Dipsey* started, everybody on board looked over the stern to see if they could catch a glimpse of their old companion, the whale. Nearly all of them were sorry that it was necessary to go away and desert this living being in his lonely solitude. They had not entered the canal when they saw the whale. Two tall farewell spouts rose into the air, and then his tail with its damaged fluke was lifted aloft and waved in a sort of gigantic adieu. Cheers and shouts of good-by came from the *Dipsey*, and the whale disappeared from their sight.

"I hope he won't come up under us," said Mrs. Block. "But I don't believe he will do that. He always kept at a respectful distance, and as long as we are goin' to sail in a canal, I wouldn't mind in the least if he followed us. But as for goin' under water with him—I don't want anybody to speak of it."

Our exploring party now found their arctic life much more interesting than it had lately been, for, from time to time, they were all enabled to leave the vessel and travel, if not upon solid land, upon very solid ice. The *Dipsey* carried several small boats, and even Sarah Block frequently landed and took a trip upon a motor sledge. Sometimes the ice was rough, or the frozen snow was piled up into hillocks, and in such cases it was easy enough to walk and draw the light sledges; but as a general thing the people on the sledges were able to travel rapidly and pleasantly. The scenery was rather monotonous, with its everlasting stretches of ice and snow, but in the far distance the mountains loomed up in the beautiful colors given them by an arctic atmosphere, and the rays of the sun still brightened the landscape at all hours. Occasionally animals, supposed to be arctic foxes, were seen at a great distance, and there were those in the company who declared that they had caught sight of a bear. But hunting was not encouraged. The party had no need of fresh meat, and there was important work to be done which should not be interfered with by sporting expeditions.

There were days of slow progress, but of varied and often exciting experiences, for sometimes the line of Mr. Marcy's canal lay through high masses of ice, and here the necessary blasting was often of a very startling character. They expected to cease their overland journey before they reached the mountains, which on the south and west were piled up much nearer to them than those in other quarters, but they were surprised to find their way stopped much sooner than they had expected it would be by masses of icebergs, which stood up in front of them out of the snowy plain.

When they were within a few miles of these glittering eminences they ceased further operations and held a council. It was perfectly possible to blow a great hole in the ice and descend into the sea at this point, but they much preferred going farther south before beginning their submarine voyage. To the eastward of the icebergs they could see with their glasses great patches of open water, and this would have prevented the making of a canal around the icebergs, for it would have been impossible to survey the route on sledges or to lay the line of bombs.

A good deal of discussion followed, during which Captain Hubbell strongly urged the plan of breaking a path to the open water, and finding out what could be done in the way of sailing south in regular nautical fashion. If the *Dipsey* could continue her voyage above water he was in favor of her doing it, but even Captain Jim Hubbell could give no good reason for believing that if the vessel got into the open water the party would not be obliged to go into winter quarters in these icy regions, for in a very few weeks the arctic winter would be upon them. Once under the water, they would not care whether it was light or dark, but in the upper air it would be quite another thing.

So Captain Hubbell's plan was given up, but it was generally agreed that it would be a very wise thing, before they took any further steps, to ascend one of the icebergs in front of them and see what was on the other side.

The mountain-climbing party consisted of Mr. Gibbs, Mr. Marcy, and three of the most active of the men. Sammy Block wanted to go with them, but his wife would not allow him to do it.

"You can take possession of poles, Sammy," said she, "for that is the thing you are good at, but when it comes to slidin' down icebergs on the small of your back, you are out of place. If I get that house that Mr. Clewe lives in now, but which he is goin' to give up when he gets married, I don't want to live there alone. I can't think of nothin' dolefuler than a widow with a polar rheumatism, and that's what I'm pretty sure I'm goin' to have."

The ascent of the nearest iceberg was not such a difficult piece of work as it would have been in the days when Sammy Block and Captain Hubbell were boys. The climbers wore ice-shoes with suckers on the soles, similar to those with which the feet of flies are furnished, so that it was almost impossible for them to slip. When they came to a sloping surface, where it was too steep for them to climb, they made use of a motor sledge furnished with a wheel different from the others. Instead of points, this wheel had on its outer rim a series of suckers, like those upon the soles of the shoes of the party. As the wheel, which was of extraordinary strength, revolved, it held its rim tightly to whatever surface it was pressed against, without reference to the angle of said surface. In 1941, with such a sledge, Martin Gallinet, a Swiss guide, ascended seventy-five feet of a perpendicular rock face on Monte Rosa. The sledge, slowly propelled by its wheel, went up the face of the rock as if it had been a fly climbing up a pane of glass, and Gallinet, suspended below this sledge by a strap under his arms, was hauled to the top of the precipice.

It was not necessary to climb any such precipices in ascending an iceberg, but there were some steep slopes, and up these the party were safely carried, one by one, by what they called their fly-foot sledge.

After an hour or two of climbing, our party safely reached the topmost point of the iceberg, and began to gaze about them. They soon found that beyond them there were other peaks and pinnacles, and that it would have been difficult to make a circuit which would enable them to continue Mr. Marcy's plan of a canal along the level ice. Far beyond them, to the south, ice-hills and ice-mountains were scattered here and there.

Suddenly Mr. Gibbs gave a shout of surprise. "I have been here before!" said he.

"Of course you have," replied Mr. Marcy. "This is Lake Shiver. Don't you see, away over there on the other side of the open water below us, that little dark spot in the icy wall? That is the frozen polar bear. Take your glass and see if I am not right."

CHAPTER XIX

THE ICY GATEWAY

WHEN Mr. Gibbs and his party returned to the *Dipsey*, after descending the iceberg, their report created a lively sensation.

"Why, it's like goin' home," said Mrs. Block. "Perhaps I may find my shoes."

It was not a very strange thing that they should have again met with this little ice-locked lake, for they had endeavored to return by a route as directly south as the other had been directly north. But no one had expected to see the lake again, and they were not only surprised, but pleased and encouraged. Here was a spot where they knew the water was deep enough for perfectly safe submarine navigation, and if they could start here under the ice they would feel quite sure that they would meet with no obstacles on the rest of their voyage.

As there was no possible entrance to this lake from the point where the *Dipsey* now lay at the end of her canal, Sammy proposed that they should make a descent into the water at the place where they were, if, after making soundings, they should find the depth sufficient. Then they might proceed southward as well as if they should start from Lake Shiver.

But this did not suit Mr. Gibbs. He had a very strong desire to reach the waters of the little lake, because he knew that at their bottom lay the telegraphic cable which he had been obliged to abandon, and he had thought that he might be able to raise this cable and reëstablish telegraphic communication with Cape Tariff and New Jersey.

Sammy thought that Mr. Gibbs's desire could be accomplished by sinking into the water in which they now lay and sailing under the icebergs to the lake. But Mr. Gibbs did not favor this. He was afraid to go under the icebergs. To be sure, they had already sailed under one of them when the *Dipsey* had made her way northward from the lake, but they had found that the depth of water varied very much in different places, and the icebergs in front of them might be heavier, and therefore more deeply sunken, than those which they had previously passed under.

If it were possible to extend their canal to Lake Shiver, Mr. Gibbs wanted to do it, but if they should fail in this, then, of course, they would be obliged to go down at this or some adjacent spot.

"It's all very well," said Captain Hubbell, who was a little depressed in spirits because the time was rapidly approaching when he would no longer command the vessel, "but it's one thing to blow a canal through fields of flat ice, and another to make it all the way through an iceberg; but if you think you can do it, I am content. I'd like to sail above water just as far as we can go."

Mr. Gibbs had been studying the situation, and some ideas relating to the solution of the problem before him were forming themselves in his mind. At last he hit upon a plan which he thought might open the waters of Lake Shiver to the *Dipsey*, and as it would not take very long to test the value of his scheme, it was determined to make the experiment.

There were but few on board who did not know that if a needle were inserted into the upper part of a large block of ice, and were then driven smartly into it, the ice would split. Upon this fact Mr. Gibbs based his theory of making an entrance to the lake.

A climbing party, larger than the previous one, set out for the iceberg, carrying with them, on several sledges, a long and heavy iron rod, which was a piece of the extra machinery on the *Dipsey*, and some explosives of a special kind.

When the iceberg had been reached, several of the party ascended with a hoisting apparatus, and with this the rod was hauled to the top and set up perpendicularly on a central spot at the summit of the iceberg, the pointed end downward, and a bomb of great power fastened to its upper end. This bomb was one designed to exert its whole explosive power in one direction, and it was now so placed that this force would be exerted downward. When all was ready, the electric-wire attachment to the bomb was carried down the iceberg and carefully laid on the ice as the party returned to the *Dipsey*.

Everybody, of course, was greatly interested in this experiment. The vessel was at least two miles from the iceberg, but in the clear atmosphere the glittering eminence could be plainly seen, and, with a glass, the great iron rod standing high up on its peak was perfectly visible. All were on deck when Mr. Gibbs stood ready to discharge the bomb on top of the rod, and all eyes were fixed upon the iceberg.

There was an explosion,—not very loud, even considering the distance,—and those who had glasses saw the rod disappear downward. Then a strange grating groan came over the snow-white plain, and the great iceberg was seen to split in half, its two peaks falling apart from each other. The most distant of the two great sections toppled far backward, and, with a great crash, turned entirely over, its upper part being heavier than its base. It struck an iceberg behind it, slid upon the level ice below, crashed through this, and sank out of sight. Then it was seen slowly to rise again, but this time with its base uppermost. The other and nearest section, fell against an adjacent iceberg, where it remained leaning for some minutes, but soon assumed an erect position. The line of cleavage had not been perpendicular, and the greater part of the base of the original iceberg remained upon the nearer section.

When the scene of destruction had been thoroughly surveyed from the deck of the *Dipsey*, volunteers were called for to go and investigate the condition of affairs near the broken iceberg. Four men, including Mr. Gibbs and Mr. Marcy, went out upon this errand—a dangerous one, for they did not know how far the ice in their direction might have been shattered or weakened by the wreck of the iceberg. They found that little or no damage had been done to the ice between them and the nearer portion of the berg, and, pursuing an eastward course on their sledges, they were enabled to look around this lofty mass and see a body of open water in the vicinity of the more distant section, almost covered with floating ice. Pressing forward still farther eastward, and going as far south as they dared, they were enabled at last to see that the two portions of the original iceberg were floating at a considerable distance from each other, and that, therefore, there was nothing to prevent the existence of an open passage between them into the lake.

When the party returned with this report work was suspended, but the next day blasting parties went out. The canal was extended to the base of the nearer iceberg, a small boat was rowed around it, and after a careful survey it was found that unless the sections of the iceberg moved together there was plenty of room for the *Dipsey* to pass between them.

When the small boat and the sledges had returned to the vessel, and everything was prepared for the start along the canal and into the lake, one of the men came to Captain Hubbell and reported that Rovinski was absent. For one brief moment a hope arose in the soul of Samuel Block that this man might have fallen overboard and floated under the ice, but he was not allowed to entertain this pleasant thought. Mr. Marcy had seized a glass, and with it was sweeping the icy plain in all directions.

"Hello!" he cried. "Some one come here! Do you see that moving speck off there to the north? I believe that is the scoundrel."

Several glasses were now directed to the spot.

"It is the Pole!" cried Sammy. "He has stolen a sledge and is running away!"

"Where on earth can he be running to?" exclaimed Mr. Gibbs. "The man is insane!"

Mr. Marcy said nothing. His motor sledge, a very fine one, furnished with an unusually large wheel, was still on the deck. He rushed toward it.

"I am going after him!" he shouted. "Let somebody come with me. He's up to mischief! He must not get away!"

"Mischief!" exclaimed Mr. Gibbs. "I don't see what mischief he can do. He can't live out here without shelter; he'll be dead before morning."

"Not he," cried Sammy. "He's a born devil, with a dozen lives! Take a gun with you, Mr. Marcy, and shoot him if you can't catch him!"

Mr. Marcy took no gun—he had no time to stop for that. In a few moments he was on the ice with his sledge, then away he went at full speed toward the distant moving black object.

Two men were soon following Mr. Marcy, but they were a long way behind him, for their sledges did not carry them at the speed with which he was flying over the ice and snow.

It was not long before Rovinski discovered that he was pursued, and, frequently turning his head backward, he saw that the foremost sledge was gaining upon him, but, crouching as low as he could to avoid a rifle-shot, he kept on his way.

But he could not help turning his head every now and then, and at one of these moments his sledge struck a projecting piece of ice and was suddenly overturned. Rovinski rolled out on the hard snow, and the propelling-wheel revolved rapidly in the air. The Pole gathered himself up quickly and turned his sledge back into its proper position. He did this in such haste that he forgot that the wheel was still revolving, and, therefore, was utterly unprepared to see the sledge start away at a great speed, leaving him standing on the snow, totally overwhelmed by astonishment and rage.

Marcy was near enough to view this catastrophe, and he stopped his sledge and burst out laughing. Now that the fellow was secure, Marcy decided to wait for his companions. When the others had reached him, the three proceeded toward Rovinski, who was standing facing them and waiting. As soon as they came within speaking distance he shouted:

"Stop where you are! I have a pistol, and I will shoot you in turn if you come any nearer. I am a free man! I have a right to go where I please. I have lost my sledge, but I can walk. Go back and tell your masters I have left their service."

Mr. Marcy reflected a moment. He was armed, but it was with a very peculiar weapon, intended for use on shipboard in case of mutinous disturbances. It was a pistol with a short range, carrying an ammonia shell. If he could get near enough to Rovinski, he could settle his business very quickly; but he believed that the pistol carried by the Pole was of the ordinary kind, and dangerous.

Something must be done immediately. It was very cold. They must soon return to the vessel. Suddenly, without a word, Mr. Marcy started his sledge forward at its utmost speed. The Pole gave a loud cry and raised his right hand, in which he held a heavy pistol. For some minutes he had been standing, his glove off, with this pistol clasped in his hand. He was so excited that he had entirely forgotten the intense coldness of the air. He attempted to aim the pistol and to curl his forefinger around the trigger, but his hand and wrist were stiff, his fingers were stiff. His pistol-barrel pointed at an angle downward. He had no power to straighten it or to pull the trigger. Standing thus, his face white with the rage of impotence, and his raised hand shaking as if it had been palsied, he was struck full in the face with the shell from Marcy's wide-mouthed pistol. The brittle capsule burst, and in a second, insensible from the fumes of the powerful ammonia it contained, Rovinski fell flat upon the snow.

When the Pole had been taken back to the vessel, and had been confined below, Mr. Gibbs, utterly unable to comprehend the motives of the man in thus rushing off to die alone amid the rigors of the polar regions, went down to talk to him. At first Rovinski refused to make any answers to the questions put to him, but at last, apparently enraged by the imputation that he must be a weak-minded, almost idiotic man to behave himself in such an imbecile fashion, he suddenly blazed out.

"Imbecile!" he cried. "Weak-minded! If it had not been for that accursed sledge, I would have shown you what sort of an imbecile I am. I can't get away now, and I will tell you how I would have been an idiot. I would have gone back to the pole, at least to the little house where, like a fool, you left the end of your cable open to me—open to anybody on board who might be brave enough to take advantage of your imbecility. I had food enough with me to last until I got back to the pole, and I knew of the provisions which you left there. Long, long before you ever reached Cape Tariff, and before your master was ready to announce your discoveries to the world, I would have been using your cable. I would have been announcing my discoveries, not in a cipher, but in plain words, not to Sardis, but to the Observatory at St. Petersburg. I would have proclaimed the discovery of the pole, I would have told of your observations and your experiments; for I am a man of science—I know these things. I would have had the honor and the glory. The north pole would have been Rovinski's Pole; that open sea would have been Rovinski's Sea. All you might have said afterwards would have amounted to nothing. It would have been an old story. I would have announced it long before. The glory would have been mine—mine for all ages to come."

"But, you foolish man," exclaimed Mr. Gibbs, "you would have perished up there—no fire, no shelter but that cabin, and very little food. Even if, kept warm and alive by your excitement and ambition, you had been able to send one message, you would have perished soon afterwards."

"What of that?" said Rovinski. "I would have sent my message. I would have told how the north pole was found. The glory and the honor would have been mine."

When Mr. Gibbs related what was said at this interview, Sammy remarked that it was a great pity to interfere with ambition like that, and Sarah acknowledged to her husband, but to him only, that she had never felt her heart sink as it had sunk when she saw Mr. Marcy coming back with that black-faced and black-hearted Pole with him.

"I felt sure," said she, "that we had got rid of him, and that after this we would not be a party of thirteen.

It does seem to me as if it is wicked to take such a creature back to civilized people. It's like carrying diseases about in your clothes, as people used to do in olden times."

"Well," said Sammy, "if we could fumigate this vessel, and feel sure that only the bad germs would shrivel, I'd be in favor of doin' it."

In less than two hours after the return of Mr. Marcy with his prisoner, the *Dipsey* started along the recently made canal, carefully rounded the nearer portion of the broken iceberg, and slowly sailed between the two upright sections. These were sufficiently far apart to afford a perfectly safe passage, but the hearts of those who gazed up on their shining, precipitous sides were filled with a chilling horror, for if a wind had suddenly sprung up, these two great sections of the icy mountain might have come together, cracking the *Dipsey* as if it had been a nut.

But no wind sprang up. The icebergs remained as motionless as if they had been anchored, and the *Dipsey* entered safely the harboring waters of Lake Shiver.

CHAPTER XX

"THAT IS HOW I LOVE YOU"

FOR several days the subject of the great perforation made by the automatic shell was not mentioned between Margaret and Roland. This troubled her a great deal, for she thoroughly understood her lover's mind, and she knew that he had something important to say to her, but was waiting until he had fully elaborated his intended statement. She said nothing about it, because it was impossible for her to do so. It made her feel sick even to think of it, and yet she was thinking of it all the time.

At last he came to her one morning, his face pale and serious. She knew, the moment her eyes fell upon him, that he had come to tell her something, and knew what it was he had to tell.

"Margaret," said he, beginning to speak as soon as he had seated himself, "I have made up my mind about that shaft. It would be absolutely wicked if I were not to go down to the bottom and see what is there. I have discovered something,—something wonderful,—and I do not know what it is. I can form no ideas about it—there is positively nothing on which I can base a theory. I have done my best to solve this problem without going down, but my telescope reveals nothing, my camera shows me nothing at all."

She sat perfectly quiet, pallid and listening.

"I have thought over this thing by day and by night," he continued, "but the conclusion forces itself upon me, steadily and irresistibly, that it is my duty to descend that shaft. I have carefully considered everything, positively everything, connected with the safety of such a descent. The air in the cavity where my shell now rests is perfectly good. I have tested it. The temperature is simply warm, and there is no danger of quicksands or anything of that sort, for my shell still rests as immovable as when I first saw it below the bottom of the shaft.

"As to the distance I should have to descend, when you come to consider it, it is nothing. What is fourteen miles in a tunnel through a mountain? Some of those on the Great Straight-cut Pacific Railroad are forty miles in length, and trains run backward and forward every day without any one considering the danger; and yet there is really more danger from one of those tunnels caving in than in my perpendicular shaft, where caving in is almost impossible.

"As to the danger which attends so great a descent, I have thoroughly provided against that. In fact, I do not see, if I carry out my plans, how there could be any danger, more than constantly surrounds us, no matter what we are doing. In the first place, we should not think of that great depth. If a man fell down any one of the deep shafts in our silver-mines, he would be as thoroughly deprived of life as if he should fall down my shaft. But to fall down mine—and I want you to consider this, Margaret, and thoroughly understand it—would be almost impossible. I have planned out all the machinery and appliances which would be necessary, and I want to describe them to you, and then, I am sure, you will see for yourself that the element of danger is more fully eliminated than if I should row you on the lake in a little boat."

She sat quiet, still pale, still listening, her eyes fixed upon him.

"I have devised a car," he said, "in which I can sit comfortably and smoke my cigar while I make the descent. This, at the easy and steady rate at which my engines would move, would occupy less than three hours. I could go a good deal faster if I wanted to, but this would be fast enough. Think of that—fourteen miles in three hours! It would be considered very slow and easy travelling on the surface of the earth. This car would be suspended by a double chain of the very best toughened steel, which would be strong enough to hold ten cars the weight of mine. The windlass would be moved by an electric engine of sufficient power to do twenty times the work I should require of it, but in order to make everything what might be called supersafe, there would be attached to the car another double chain, similar to the first, and this would be wound upon another windlass, and worked by another engine, as powerful as the first one. Thus, even if one of these double chains should break,—an accident almost impossible,—or if anything should happen to one of these engines, there would be another engine more than sufficient for the work. The top of this car would be conical, ending in a sharp point, and made of steel, so that if any fragment in the wall of the tunnel should become dislodged and fall, it would glance from this roof and fall between the side of the car and the inner surface of the shaft; for the car is to be only twenty-six inches in diameter, —quite wide enough for my purpose,—and this would leave at least ten inches of space all around the car.

"But, as I have said before, the sides of this tunnel are hard and smooth. The substances of which they are composed have been pressed together by a tremendous force. It is as unlikely that anything should fall from them as that particles should drop from the inside of a rifle-barrel.

"I admit, Margaret, that this proposed journey into the depths of the earth is a very peculiar one, but, after all, it is comparatively an easy and safe performance when compared to other things that men have done. The mountain-climbers of our fathers' time, who used to ascend the highest peaks with nothing but spiked shoes and sharpened poles, ran far more danger than would be met by one who would descend such a shaft as mine.

"And then, Margaret, think of what our friends on board the *Dipsey* have been and are doing! Think of the hundreds of miles they have travelled through the unknown depths of the sea! Their expedition was fifty times as hazardous as the trip of a few hours which I propose."

Now Margaret spoke:

"But I am not engaged to be married to Samuel Block, to Mr. Gibbs, or to any of the rest of them."

He drew his chair closer to her, and he took both of her hands in his own. He held them as if they had been two lifeless things.

"Margaret," he said, "you know I love you, and—"

"Yes," she interrupted, "but I know that you love science more."

"Not at all," said he, "and I am going to show you how greatly mistaken you are. Tell me not to go down that shaft, tell me to live on without ever knowing what it is I have discovered, tell me to explode bombs in that great hole until I have blocked it up, and I will obey you. That is how I love you, Margaret."

She gazed into his eyes, and her hands, from merely lifeless things, became infused with a gentle warmth; they moved as if they might return the clasp in which they were held. But she did not speak, she simply looked at him, and he patiently waited. Suddenly she rose to her feet, withdrawing her hands from his hold as if he had hurt her.

"Roland," she exclaimed, "you think you know all that is in my heart, but you do not. You know it is filled with dread, with horror, with a sickening fear, but it holds more than that. It holds a love for you which is stronger than any fear or horror or dread. Roland, you must go down that shaft, you must know the great discovery you have made. Even if you should never be able to come back to earth again, you must die knowing what it is. That is how I love you!"

Roland quickly made a step forward, but she moved back as if she were about to seat herself again. Suddenly her knees bent beneath her, and, before he could touch her, she had fallen over on her side and lay senseless on the floor.

CHAPTER XXI

THE CAVE OF LIGHT

MARGARET was put into the charge of her faithful housekeeper, and Roland did not see her again until the evening. As she met him she began immediately to talk upon some unimportant subject, and there was that in her face which told him that it was her desire that the great thought which filled both their minds should not be the subject of their conversation. She told him she was going to the sea-shore for a short time. She needed a change, and she would go the next day. He understood her perfectly, and they discussed various matters of business connected with the works. She said nothing about the time of her return, and he did not allude to it.

On the day that Margaret left Sardis, Roland began his preparations for descending the shaft. He had so thoroughly considered the machinery and appliances necessary for the undertaking, and had worked out all his plans in such detail, in his mind and upon paper, that he knew exactly what he wanted to do. His orders for the great length of chain exhausted the stock of several manufactories, and the engines he obtained were even more powerful than he had intended them to be; but these he could procure immediately, and for smaller ones he would have been obliged to wait.

The circular car which was intended to move up and down the shaft, and the peculiar machinery connected with it, with the hoisting apparatus, were all made in his works. His skilled artisans labored steadily day and night.

It was ten days before he was ready to make his descent. Margaret was still at the sea-shore. They had written to each other frequently, but neither had made mention of the great shaft. Even when he was ready to go down, he said nothing to any one of any immediate intention of descending. There was a massive door which covered the mouth of the pit. This he ordered locked, and went away.

The next morning he walked into the building a little earlier than was his custom, called for the engineers, and for Mr. Bryce, who was to take charge of everything connected with the descent, and announced that he was going down as soon as preparations could be made.

Mr. Bryce and the men who were to assist him were very serious. They said nothing that was not necessary. If their employer had been any other man than Roland Clewe, it is possible they might have remonstrated with him. But they knew him, and they said and did nothing more than was their duty.

The door of the shaft was removed, the car which had hung high above it was lowered to the mouth of the opening, and Roland stepped within it and seated himself. Above him and around him were placed geological tools and instruments of many kinds, a lantern, food and drink—everything, in fact, which he could possibly be presumed to need upon this extraordinary journey. A telephone was at his side by which he could communicate at any time with the surface of the earth. There were electric bells. There was everything to make his expedition safe and profitable. When he gave the word to start the engines, there were no ceremonies, and nothing was said out of the common.

When the conical top of the car had descended below the surface, a steel grating, with orifices for the passage of the chains, was let down over the mouth of the shaft, and the downward journey was begun. In the floor of the car were grated openings, through which Clewe could look downward. But although the shaft below him was brilliantly illuminated by electric lights placed under the car, it did not frighten him or make him dizzy to look down, for the aperture did not appear to be very far below him. The upper part of the car was partially open, and bright lights shone upon the sides of the shaft.

As he slowly descended, he could see the various strata appearing and disappearing in the order in which he knew them. Not far below the surface he passed cavities which he believed had held water, but there was no water in them now. He had expected these, and had feared that upon their edges there might be loosened patches of rock or soil, but everything seemed tightly packed and hard. If anything had been loosened, it had gone down already.

Down, down he went until he came to the eternal rocks, where the inside of the shaft was polished as if it had been made of glass. It became warmer and warmer, but he knew that the heat would soon decrease. The character of the rocks changed, and he studied them as he went down, and continually made notes.

After a time the polished rocky sides of the shaft grew to be of a solemn sameness. Clewe ceased to take notes. He lighted a cigar and smoked. He tried to quietly imagine what he would come to when he got to the bottom. It would be some sort of a cave into which his shell had made an opening. He wondered what sort of a cave it would be, and how high the roof of it was from the bottom. He wondered if his gardener had remembered what he had told him about the flower-beds in front of his house. He wanted certain changes made which Margaret had suggested. He tried to keep his mind on the flower-beds, but it drifted away to the cave below. He began to wonder if he would come to some underground body of water where he would be drowned. But he knew that was a silly thought. If the shaft had gone through subterranean reservoirs, the water of these would have run out, and, before they reached the bottom of the shaft, would have dissipated into mist.

Down, down he went. He looked at his watch. He had been in that car only an hour and a half. Was that possible? He had supposed he was almost at the bottom. Suddenly he thought of the people above, and of the telephone. Why had not some of them spoken to him? It was shameful! He instantly called Bryce, and his heart leaped with joy when he heard the familiar voice in his ear. Now he talked steadily on for more than an hour. He had his gardener called, and he told him all that he wanted done in the flower-beds. He gave many directions in regard to the various operations of the works. Things had been put back a great deal of late. He hoped soon to have everything going on in the ordinary way. There were two or three inventions in which he took particular interest, and of these he talked at great length with Mr. Bryce. Suddenly, in the midst of some talk about hollow steel rods, he told Bryce to let the engines move faster—there was no reason why the car should go so slowly.

The windlasses moved with a little more rapidity, and Clewe now turned and looked at an indicator which was placed on the side of the car, a little over his head. This instrument showed the depth to which he had descended, but he had not looked at it before, for if there should be anything which would make him nervous, it would be the continual consideration of the depth to which he had descended.

The indicator showed that he had gone down fourteen and one eighth miles. Clewe turned and sat stiffly in his seat. He glanced down, and saw beneath him only an illuminated hole, fading away at the bottom. Then he turned to speak to Bryce, but, to his surprise, he could think of nothing to say. After that he lighted another cigar and sat quietly.

Some minutes passed,—he did not know how many,—and he looked down through the gratings at the floor of the car. The electric light streamed downward through a deep orifice, which did not fade away and end in nothing. It ended in something dark and glittering. Then, as he came nearer and nearer to this glittering thing, he saw that it was his automatic shell, lying on its side, but he could see only a part of it through the opening of the bottom of the shaft which he was descending. In an instant, as it seemed to him, the car emerged from the narrow shaft, and he seemed to be hanging in the air—at least, there was nothing he could see except that great shell, lying some forty feet below him. But it was impossible that the shell should be lying on the air! He rang to stop the car.

"Anything the matter?" cried Bryce, almost at the same instant.

"Nothing at all," Clewe replied. "It's all right. I am near the bottom."

In a state of the highest nervous excitement, Clewe gazed about him. He was no longer in a shaft. But where was he? Look out on what side he would, he saw nothing but the light going out from his lamps, but which seemed to extend indefinitely all about him. There seemed to be no limit to his vision in any direction. Then he leaned over the side of his car and looked downward. There was the great shell directly under him, but under it and around it, extending as far beneath it as it extended in every other direction, was the light from his own lamps; and yet that great shell, weighing many tons, lay as if it rested upon the solid ground!

After a few moments Clewe shut his eyes. They pained him. Something seemed to be coming into them, like a fine frost in a winter wind. Then he called to Bryce to let the car descend very slowly. It went down, down, gradually approaching the great shell. When the bottom of the car was within two feet of it, Clewe rang to stop. He looked down at the complicated machine he had worked upon so long, with something like a feeling of affection. This he knew—it was his own. Looking upon its familiar form, he felt that he had a companion in this region of unreality.

Pushing back the sliding door of the car, Clewe sat upon the bottom and cautiously put out his feet and legs, lowering them until they touched the shell. It was firm and solid. Although he knew it must be so, the immovability of the great mass of iron gave him a sudden shock of mysterious fear. How could it be immovable when there was nothing under it?

But he must get out of that car—he must explore, he must find out. There certainly could be no danger, so long as he could cling to his shell.

He now cautiously got out of the car and let himself down upon the shell. It was not a pleasant surface to stand upon, being uneven, with great spiral ribs, and Clewe sat down upon it, clinging to it with his hands. Then he leaned over to one side and looked beneath him. The shadow of that shell went down, down, down, until it made him sick to look at it. He drew back quickly, clutched the shell with his arms, and shut his eyes. He felt as if he were about to drop with it into a measureless depth of atmosphere.

But he soon raised himself. He had not come down here to be frightened, to let his nerves run away with him. He had come to find out things. What was it that this shell rested upon? Seizing two of the ribs with a strong clutch, he let himself hang over the sides of the shell until his feet were level with its lower side. They touched something hard. He pressed them downward. It was very hard. He raised himself and stood upon the substance which supported the shell. It was as solid as any rock. He looked down and saw his shadow stretching far beneath him. It seemed as if he were standing upon petrified air. He put out one foot and he moved a little, still holding on to the shell. He walked, as if upon solid air, to the foremost end of the long projectile. It relieved him to turn his thoughts from what was around him to this familiar object. He found its conical end shattered and broken.

After a little he slowly made his way back to the other end of the shell, and now his eyes became somewhat accustomed to the great radiance about him. He thought he could perceive here and there faint indications of long, nearly horizontal lines—lines of different shades of light. Above him, as if it hung in the air, was the round, dark hole through which he had descended.

He rose, took his hands from the shell, and made a few steps. He trod upon a horizontal surface, but in putting one foot forward he felt a slight incline. It seemed to him that he was about to slip downward! Instantly he retreated to the shell, and clutched it in a sudden frenzy of fear.

Standing thus, with his eyes still wandering, he heard the bell of the telephone ring. Without hesitation he mounted the shell and got into the car. Bryce was calling him.

"Come up," he said. "You have been down there long enough. No matter what you have found, it is time for you to come up."

Roland Clewe was not accustomed to receive commands, but he instantly closed the sliding door of the car, seated himself, and put his mouth to the telephone.

"All right," he said. "You can haul me up, but go very slowly at first."

The car rose. When it reached the orifice in the top of the cave of light, Clewe heard the conical steel top grate slightly as it touched its edge, for it was still swinging a little from the motion given to it by his entrance, but it soon hung perfectly vertical and went silently up the shaft.

CHAPTER XXII

CLEWE'S THEORY

SEATED in the car, which was steadily ascending the great shaft, Roland Clewe took no notice of anything about him. He did not look at the brilliantly lighted interior of the shaft, he paid no attention to his instruments, he did not consult his watch, nor glance at the dial which indicated the distance he had travelled. Several times the telephone bell rang, and Bryce inquired how he was getting along. But these questions he answered as briefly as possible, and sat looking down at his knees and seeing nothing.

When he was half-way up he suddenly became conscious that he was very hungry. He hurriedly ate some sandwiches and drank some water, and then again he gave himself up entirely to mental labor. When, at last, the noise of machinery above him and the sound of voices aroused him from his abstraction, and the car emerged upon the surface of the earth, Clewe hastily slid back the door and stepped out. At that instant he felt himself encircled by a pair of arms. Bryce was near by, and there were other men by the engines, but the owner of those arms thought nothing of this.

"Margaret!" cried Clewe, "how came you here?"

"I have been here all the time," she exclaimed, "or, at least, nearly all the time." And as she spoke she drew back and looked at him, her eyes full of happy tears. "Mr. Bryce telegraphed to me the instant he knew you were going down, and I was here before you had descended half-way."

"What!" he cried. "And all those messages came from you?"

"Nearly all," she answered. "But tell me, Roland—tell me, have you been successful? What have you discovered?"

"I am successful," he answered. "I have discovered everything!"

Mr. Bryce came forward.

"I will speak to you all very soon," said Clewe. "I can't tell you anything now. Margaret, let us go. I shall want to talk to you directly, but not until I have been to my office. I will meet you at your house in a very few minutes." With that he left the building and fairly ran to his office.

A quarter of an hour later Roland entered Margaret's library, where she sat awaiting him. He carefully closed the doors and windows. They sat side by side upon the sofa.

"Now, Roland," she said, "I cannot wait one second longer. What is it that you have discovered?"

"Margaret," said he, "I am afraid you will have to wait a good many seconds. If I were to tell you directly what I have discovered, you would not understand it. I am the possessor of wonderful facts, but I believe also that I am the master of a theory more wonderful. The facts I found out when I got to the bottom of the shaft, but the theory I worked out coming up."

"But give them to me quickly!" she cried. "The facts first—I can wait for the theory."

"No," he said, "I cannot do it. I must tell you the whole thing as I have it arranged in my mind. Now, in the first place, you must understand that this earth was once a comet."

"Oh, bother your astronomy! I really can't understand it. What did you find in the bottom of that hole?"

"You must listen to me," he said. "You cannot comprehend a thing I say if I do not give it to you in the proper order. There have been a great many theories about comets, but there is only one of them in which I have placed any belief. You know that as a comet passes around the sun, its tail is always pointed away from the sun, so that no matter how rapidly the head shall be moving in its orbit, the end of the tail—in order to keep its position—must move with a rapidity impossible to conceive. If this tail were composed of nebulous mist, or anything of that sort, it could not keep its position. There is only one theory which could account for this position, and that is that the head of a comet is a lens and the tail is light. The light of the sun passes through the lens and streams out into space, forming the tail, which does not follow the comet in the inconceivable manner generally supposed, but is constantly renewed, always, of course, stretching away from the sun!"

"Oh, dear!" ejaculated Margaret. "I have read that."

"A little patience," he said. "When I arrived at the bottom of the shaft, I found myself in a cleft, I know not how large, made in a vast mass of transparent substance, hard as the hardest rock, and transparent as air in the light of my electric lamps. My shell rested securely upon this substance. I walked upon it. It seemed as if I could see miles below me. In my opinion, Margaret, that substance was once the head of a comet."

"What is the substance?" she asked hastily.

"It is a mass of solid diamond!"

Margaret screamed. She could not say one word.

"Yes," said he, "I believe the whole central portion of the earth is one great diamond. When it was moving about in its orbit as a comet, the light of the sun streamed through this diamond and spread an enormous tail out into space. After a time this nucleus began to burn."

"Burn!" exclaimed Margaret.

"Yes, the diamond is almost pure carbon. Why should it not burn? It burnt and burnt and burnt. Ashes formed upon it and encircled it. Still it burnt, and when it was entirely covered with its ashes, it ceased to be transparent—it ceased to be a comet. It became a planet, and revolved in a different orbit. Still it burnt within its covering of ashes, and these gradually changed to rock, to metal, to everything that forms the crust of the earth."

She gazed upon him, entranced.

"Some parts of this great central mass of carbon burn more fiercely than other parts. Some parts do not burn at all. In volcanic regions the fires rage. Where my great shell went down it does not burn at all. Now you have my theory. It is crude and rough, for I have tried to give it to you in as few words as possible."

"Oh, Roland," she cried, "it is absurd! Diamond! Why, people will think you are crazy. You must not say such a thing as that to anybody. It is simply impossible that the greater part of this earth should be an enormous diamond."

"Margaret," he answered, "nothing is impossible. The central portion of this earth is composed of something. It might just as well be diamond as anything else. In fact, if you consider the matter, it is more likely to be, because diamond is a very original substance. As I have said, it is almost pure carbon. I do not intend to say one word of what I have told you to any one,—at least, until the matter has been well considered,—but I am not afraid of being thought crazy. Margaret, will you look at these?"

He took from his pocket some shining substances resembling glass. Some of them were flat, some round; the largest was as big as a lemon, others were smaller fragments of various sizes.

"These are pieces of the great diamond which were broken when the shell struck the bottom of the cave in which I found it. I picked them up as I felt my way around this shell, when walking upon what seemed to me like solid air. I thrust them into my pocket, and I would not come to you, Margaret, with this story, until I had gone to my office to find out if these fragments were really diamond. I tested them. Their substance is diamond!"

Half dazed, she took the largest piece in her hand.

"Roland," she whispered, "if this is really a diamond, there is nothing like it known to man!"

"Nothing, indeed," said he.

She sat staring at the great piece of glowing mineral which lay in her hand. Its surface was irregular; it had many faces; the subdued light from the window gave it the appearance of animated water. He felt it necessary to speak.

"Even these little pieces," he said, "are most valuable jewels."

She still sat silent, looking at the glowing object she held.

"You see, these are not like the stones which are found in our diamond-fields," he said. "Those, most likely, were little unconsumed bits of the original mass, afterwards gradually forced up from the interior in the same way that many metals and minerals are forced up, and then rounded and dulled by countless ages of grinding and abrasion, due to the action of rocks or water."

"Roland," she cried excitedly, "this is riches beyond imagination! What is common wealth to what you have discovered? Every living being on earth could—"

"Ah, Margaret," he interrupted, "do not let your thoughts run that way. If my discovery should be put to the use of which you are thinking, it would bring poverty, not wealth, to the world, and not a diamond on earth would be worth more than a common pebble. Everywhere, in civilized countries and in barbaric palaces, people would see their riches vanish before them as if it had been blighted by the touch of an evil magician."

She trembled. "And these—are they to be valued as common pebbles?"

"Oh, no," said he. "So long as that great shaft is mine, these broken fragments are to us riches far ahead of our wildest imaginations."

"Roland," she cried, "are you going down into that shaft for more of them?"

"Never, never, never again," he said. "What we have here is enough for us, and if I were offered all the good that there is in this world, which money cannot buy, I would never go down into that cleft again. There was one moment when I stood in that cave in which an awful terror shot into my soul which I shall never be able to forget. In the light of my electric lamps, sent through a vast transparent mass, I could see nothing, but I could feel. I put out my foot, and I found it was upon a sloping surface. In another instant I might have slidden—where? I cannot bear to think of it!"

She threw her arms around him and held him tightly.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE LAST DIVE OF THE "DIPSEY"

WHEN the engines of the *Dipsey* had stopped, and she was quietly floating upon the smooth surface of Lake Shiver, Mr. Gibbs greatly desired to make a connection with the telegraphic cable which was stretched at the bottom of the ocean beneath him, and to thus communicate with Sardis. But when this matter was discussed in council, several objections were brought against it, the principal one being that the cable could not be connected with the *Dipsey* without destroying its connection with the little station near the pole; and although this means of telegraphic communication with regions which might never be visited again might well be considered as possessing no particular value, still it was such a wonderful thing to lay a telegraph line to the pole that it seemed the greatest pity in the world to afterwards destroy it.

The friends of this exploring party had not heard from it since it left the polar sea, but there could be no harm in making them wait a little longer. If the return voyage under the ice should be as successfully accomplished as the first submarine cruise, it would not be very many days before the *Dipsey* should arrive at Cape Tariff. She would not proceed so slowly as she did when coming north, for now her officers would feel that in a measure they knew the course, and, moreover, they would not be delayed by the work of laying a cable as they progressed.

So it was agreed that it would be a waste of time and labor to stop here and make connection with the cable, and preparations were made for a descent to a safe depth beneath the surface, when they would start southward on their homeward voyage. Mrs. Sarah Block, wrapped from head to foot in furs, remained on deck as long as her husband would allow her to do so. For some time before her eyes had been slowly wandering around the edge of that lonely piece of water, and it was with an unsatisfied air that she now stood gazing from side to side. At last Sammy took her by the arm and told her she must go below, for they were going to close up the hatchways.

"Well," said Sarah, with a sigh, "I suppose I must give 'em up. They were the warmest and most comfortable ones I had, and I could have thawed 'em out and dried 'em so that they would have been as good as ever. I would not mind leavin' 'em if there was a human bein' in this neighborhood that would wear 'em. But there ain't, and it ain't likely there ever will be, and if they are frozen stiff in the ice somewhere, they may stay here, as good as new, for countless ages!"

Of course, everybody was very happy, now that they were returning homeward from a voyage successful beyond parallel in history, and even Rovinski was beginning to assume an air of gratified anticipation.

He had been released from his confinement and allowed to attend to his duties, but the trust which had been placed in him when this kindness had been extended to him on a previous occasion was wanting now. Everybody knew that he was an unprincipled man, and that if he could gain access to the telegraph instrument at Cape Tariff he would make trouble for the real discoverer of the north pole, so it was agreed among the officers of the vessel that the strictest watch must be kept on him, and no shore privileges be allowed him.

The southward voyage of the *Dipsey* was an easy one and without notable incident, and at last a lookout who had been posted at the upper skylight reported light from above. This meant that they had reached open water south of the frozen regions they had been exploring, and that the great submarine voyage, the most peculiar ever made by man, was ended. Captain Jim Hubbell immediately put on a heavy pea-jacket with silver buttons, for as soon as the vessel should sail upon the surface of the sea he would be in command.

When the dripping *Dipsey* rose from the waters of the arctic regions, it might have been supposed that the people on board of her were emerging into a part of the world where they felt perfectly at home. Cape Tariff, to which they were bound, was a hundred miles away, and was itself a lonely spot, often inaccessible in severe weather, and they must make a long and hazardous voyage from it before they could reach their homes; but by comparison with the absolutely desolate and mysterious region they had left, any part of the world where there was a possibility of meeting with other human beings seemed familiar and homelike.

But when the *Dipsey* was again upon the surface of the ocean, when the light of day was shining unobstructed upon the bold form of Captain Hubbell as he strode upon the upper deck,—being careful not to stand still, lest his shoes should freeze fast to the planks beneath him,—the party on board were not so well satisfied as they expected to be. There was a great wind blowing, and the waves were rolling high. Not far away, on their starboard bow, a small iceberg, tossing like a disabled ship, was surging toward them, impelled by a biting blast from the east, and the sea was so high that sometimes the spray swept over the deck of the vessel, making it impossible for Captain Hubbell and the others with him to keep dry.

Still the captain kept his post and roared out his orders, still the *Dipsey* pressed forward against wind and wave. Her engines were strong, her electric gills were folded close to her sides, and she seemed to feel herself able to contend against the storm, and in this point she was heartily seconded by her captain.

But the other people on board soon began to have ideas of a different kind. It seemed to all of them, including the officers, that this vessel, not built to encounter very heavy weather, was in danger, and even if she should be able to successfully ride out the storm, their situation must continue to be a very unpleasant one. The *Dipsey* pitched and tossed and rolled and shook herself, and it was the general opinion, below decks, that the best thing for her to do would be to sink into the quiet depths below the surface, where she was perfectly at home, and proceed on her voyage to Cape Tariff in the submarine fashion to which she was accustomed.

It was some time before Captain Hubbell would consent to listen to such a proposition as this, but when a wave, carrying on its crest a lump of ice about the size of a flour-barrel, threw its burden on the deck of the vessel, raking it from stem to stern, the captain, who had barely been missed by the grating missile, agreed that, in a vessel with such a low rail and of such defective naval principles, it would be better perhaps to sail under the water than on top of it, and so he went below, took off his pea-jacket with the silver buttons, and retired into private life. The *Dipsey* then sank to a quiet depth and continued her course under water, to the great satisfaction of everybody on board.

On a fine, frosty morning, with a strong wind blowing, although the storm had subsided, the few inhabitants of the little settlement at Cape Tariff saw in the distance a flag floating over the water. The *Dipsey* had risen to the surface some twenty miles from the cape, and now came bravely on, Captain Hubbell on deck, his silver buttons shining in the sun. The sea was rough, but everybody was willing to bear with a little discomfort in order to be able to see the point of land which was the end of the voyage on the *Dipsey*—to let their eyes rest as early as possible upon a wreath of smoke arising from the habitation of human beings, and to catch sight of those human beings themselves.

As soon as the *Dipsey* arrived in the harbor, Sammy and most of the officers went on shore to open communication with Sardis. Sarah Block stayed on the vessel. She had been on shore when she had arrived at Cape Tariff in the *Go Lightly*, and her disgust with the methods of living in that part of the world had been freely expressed. So long as she had perfectly comfortable quarters on board the good ship, she did not wish to visit the low huts and extremely close quarters in which dwelt the people of the little colony. Rovinski also remained on board, but not because he wanted to do so. A watch was kept upon him, but as the *Dipsey* was anchored some distance from the landing-place, Mr. Marcy was of the opinion that if he attempted to swim ashore, it might be well to let him do so, for if he should not be benumbed in the water into which he would plunge, he would certainly be frozen to death as soon as he reached the shore.

The messages which came from Sardis as soon as news had been received of the safe return of the explorers were full of hearty congratulations and friendly welcome, but they were not very long, and Sammy said to Mr. Gibbs that he thought it likely that this was one of Mr. Clewe's busy times. The latter telegraphed that he would send a vessel for them immediately, and as she was now lying at St. John's, they would not have to wait very long.

The fact was that the news of the arrival of the *Dipsey* at Cape Tariff had come to Sardis a week after Clewe's descent into the shaft, and he was absorbed, body and soul, in his underground discoveries. He was not wanting in sympathy, or even affection, for the people who had been doing his work, and his interest in their welfare and their achievements was as great as it ever had been, but the ideas and thoughts which now occupied his mind were of a character which lessened and overshadowed every other object of consideration. Most of the messages sent to Cape Tariff had come from Margaret Raleigh.

CHAPTER XXIV

ROVINSKI COMES TO THE SURFACE

When Sammy Block and his companion explorers had journeyed from Cape Tariff to Sardis, they found Roland Clewe ready to tender a most grateful welcome, and to give full and most interested attention to the stories of their adventures and to their scientific reports. For a time he was willing to allow his own great discovery to lie fallow in his mind, and to give his whole attention to the wonderful achievement which had been made under his direction.

He had worked out his theory of the formation and present constitution of the earth, had written a full and complete report of what he had seen and done, and was ready, when he thought the proper time had arrived, to announce to the world his theories and his facts. Moreover, he had sent to several jewellers and mineralogists some of the smaller fragments which he had picked up in the cave of light, and these specialists, while reporting the material of the specimens purest diamond, expressed the greatest surprise at their shape and brilliancy. They had evidently not been ground or cut, and yet their sharp points and glittering surfaces reflected light as if they had been in the hands of a diamond-cutter. One of these experts wrote to Clewe asking him if he had been digging diamonds with a machine which broke the gems to pieces.

So the soul of Roland Clewe was satisfied. It seemed to walk the air as he himself once had trod what seemed to him a solid atmosphere. There was now nothing that his ambition might point out which would induce him to endeavor to climb higher in the field of human achievement than the spot on which he stood. From this great elevation he was perfectly willing to look down and kindly consider the heroic performances of those who had reached the pole, and who had anchored a buoy on the extreme northern point of the earth's axis.

Mr. Gibbs's reports, and those of his assistants, were well worked out, and of the greatest value to the scientific world, and every one who had made that memorable voyage on the *Dipsey* had stories to tell for which editors in every civilized land would have paid gold beyond all former precedent.

But Roland Clewe did not care to say anything to the world until he could say everything that he wished to say. It had been known that he had sent an expedition into Northern waters, but exactly what he intended to do had not been known, and what he had done had not been communicated even to the telegraph operators at Cape Tariff. These had received despatches in cipher from points far away to the north, but, while they transmitted them to Sardis, they had no idea of their signification. When everything should be ready to satisfy the learned world, as well as the popular mind, the great discovery of the pole would be announced.

In the meantime there was a suspicion in the journalistic world that the man of inventions who lived at Sardis, New Jersey, had done something out of the common in the North. A party of people, one of them a woman, had been taken up there and left there, and they had recently been brought back. The general opinion was that Clewe had endeavored to found a settlement at some point north of Cape Tariff, probably for purposes of scientific observation, and that he had failed. The stories of these people, however, would be interesting, and several reporters made visits to Sardis. But they all saw Sammy, and not one of them considered his communications worth more than a brief paragraph.

In a week Mr. Gibbs would have finished his charts, his meteorological, geological, and geographical reports, and a clear, succinct account of the expedition, written by Clewe himself from the statements of the party, would be ready for publication.

In the brilliantly lighted sky of discovery which now rested, one edge upon Sardis and the other upon the pole, there was but one single cloud, and this was Rovinski.

The ambitious and unscrupulous Pole had been the source of the greatest trouble and uneasiness since he had left Cape Tariff. While there he had found that he could not possibly get ashore, and so had kept quiet; but when on board the vessel which had been sent to them from St. John's, he had soon begun to talk to the crew, and there seemed to be but one way of preventing him from making known what had been done by the expedition before its promoters were ready for the disclosure, and this was to declare him a maniac, whose utterances were of no value whatever. He was put into close confinement, and it was freely reported that he had gone crazy while in the arctic regions, and that his mind had been filled with all sorts of insane notions regarding that part of the world.

It had been intended to put him in jail on a criminal charge, but this would not prevent him from talking, and so, when he arrived in New Jersey, he was sent to an insane asylum, the officers of which were not surprised to receive him, for, in their opinion, a wilder looking maniac was not to be found within the walls of the institution.

Early on the morning of the day before the world was to be electrified by the announcement of the discovery of the pole, a man named William Cunningham, employed in the Sardis Works, entered the large building which had been devoted to the manufacture of the automatic shell, but which had not been used of late and had been kept locked. Cunningham was the watchman, and had entered to make his usual morning rounds. He had scarcely closed the door behind him when, looking over toward the engines which still stood by the mouth of the shaft made by the automatic shell, he was amazed to see that the car which had been used by Roland Clewe in his descent was not hanging above them.

Utterly unable to understand this state of affairs, he ran to the mouth of the shaft. He found the great trap-door which had closed it thrown back, and the grating, which had been made to cover the orifice after the car had descended, in its place. The engines were not moving, and the chain on the windlass of one of them appeared not to have been disturbed, but on the other windlass one of the chains had been unwound. Cunningham was so astonished that he could not believe what he saw. He had been there the night before. Everything had been in order, the shaft closed, and the trap-door locked. He leaned over the grating and looked down. He could see nothing but a black hole without any bottom. The man did not look long, for it made him dizzy. He turned and ran out of the house to call Mr. Bryce.

Ivan Rovinski was not perhaps a lunatic, but his unprincipled ambition had made him so disregard the principles of ordinary prudence, when such principles stood in his way, that it could not be said that he was at all times entirely sane. He understood thoroughly why he had been put in an asylum, and it enraged him to think that by this course his enemies had obtained a great advantage over him. No matter what he might say, it was only necessary to point to the fact that he was in a lunatic asylum, or that he had just come out of one, to make his utterances of no value.

But to remain in confinement did not suit him at all, and, after three days' residence in the institution in which he had been placed, he escaped and made his way to a piece of woods about two miles from Sardis, where, early that year, he had built himself a rude shelter, from which he might go forth at night and study, so far as he should be able, the operations in the works of Roland Clewe. Having safely reached his retreat, he lost no time in sallying forth to spy out what was going on at Sardis.

He was cunning and wary, and a man of infinite resource. It was not long before he found out that the polar discovery had not been announced, but he also discovered, from listening to the conversations of some of the workmen in the village, which he frequently visited in a guise very unlike his ordinary appearance, that something extraordinary had taken place in the Sardis Works, of which he had never heard. A great shaft had been sunk, the people said, by accident. Mr. Clewe had gone down it in a car, and it had taken him nearly three hours to get to the bottom. Nobody yet knew what he had discovered, but it was supposed to be something very wonderful.

The night after Rovinski heard this surprising news he was in the building which had contained the automatic shell. As active as a cat, he had entered by an upper window.

Rovinski spent the night in that building. He had with him a dark lantern, and he made the most thorough examination of the machinery at the mouth of the shaft. He was a man of great mechanical ability and an expert in applied electricity. He understood that machinery, with all its complicated arrangements and appliances, as well as if he had built it himself. In fact, while examining it, he thought of some very valuable improvements which might have been made in it. He knew that it was an apparatus for lowering the car to a great depth, and, climbing into the car, he examined everything it contained. Coming down, he noticed the grating, and he knew what it was for. He looked over the engines and calculated the strength of the chains on the windlasses. He took an impression of the lock of the trap-door, and when he went away in the very early hours of the morning he understood the apparatus which was intended to lower the car as well as any person who had managed it. He knew nothing about the shaft under the great door, but this he intended to investigate as thoroughly as he had investigated the machinery.

The next night he entered the building very soon after Cunningham had gone his rounds, and he immediately set to work to prepare for his descent into the shaft. He disconnected one of the engines, for he sneeringly said to himself that the other one was more than sufficient to lower and raise the car. He charged and arranged all the batteries, and put in perfect working order the mechanism by which Clewe had established a connection between the car and the engines, using one of the chains as a conductor, so that he could himself check or start the engines if an emergency should render it necessary.

Then Rovinski, bounding around like a wild animal in a cage, took out a key he had brought with him, opened the trap-door, lifted it back, and gazed down. He could see a beautifully cut well, but that was all. But no matter how deep it was, he intended to go down to the bottom of it.

He started the engine and lowered the car to the ground. Then he looked up at a grating which hung above it, and determined to make use of this protection. He could not lower it in the ordinary way after he had entered the car, but in fifteen minutes he had arranged a pulley and rope by which, after the car had gone below the surface, he could lower the grating to its place. He got in, started down into the dark hole, stopped the engine, lowered the grating, went down a little farther, and turned on the electric lights.

The descent of Rovinski was a succession of the wildest sensations of amazed delight. Stratum after stratum passed before his astonished eyes, and, when he had gone down low enough, he allowed himself the most extravagant expressions of ecstasy. His progress was not so regular and steady as that of Roland Clewe had been. He found that he had perfect control of the engine and car, and sometimes he went down rapidly, sometimes slowly, and frequently he stopped. As he continued to descend, his amazement at the wonderful depth of the shaft became greater and greater, and his mind was totally unable to appreciate the situation. Still he was not frightened, and went on down.

At last Rovinski emerged into the cave of light. There he stopped, the car hanging some twenty or thirty feet above the bottom. He looked out. He saw the shell, he saw the vast expanse of lighted nothingness. He tried to imagine what it was that that mass of iron rested upon. If he had not seen it, he would have thought he had come out into the upper air of some bottomless cavern. But a great iron machine nearly twenty feet long could not rest upon air! He thought he might be dreaming. He sat up and shut his eyes. In a few minutes he would open them and see if he still saw the same incomprehensible things.

The downward passage of Rovinski had occupied a great deal more time than he had calculated for. He had stopped so much, and had been so careful to examine the walls of the shaft, that morning had now arrived in the upper world, and it was at this moment, as he sat with his eyes closed, that William Cunningham looked down into the mouth of the shaft.

Cunningham was an observing man, and that morning he had picked up a pin and stuck it in the lapel of his rough coat, but he had done this hastily and carelessly. The pin was of a recently invented kind, being of light, elastic steel, with its head somewhat larger than that of an ordinary pin. As Cunningham leaned forward this pin slipped out of his coat. It fell through one of the openings in the grating, and descended the shaft head downward.

For the first quarter of a mile the pin went swiftly, in an absolutely perpendicular line, nearly at the middle of the shaft. For the next three quarters of a mile it went down like a rifle-ball. For the next five miles it sped on as if it had been a planet, revolving in space. Then, for eight miles, this pin, falling perpendicularly through a greater distance than any object on this earth had ever fallen perpendicularly, went downward with a velocity like that of light. Its head struck the top of the car, which was hanging motionless in the cave of light. It did not glance off, for its momentum was so great that it would glance from nothing. It passed through that steel roof; it passed through Rovinski's head, through his heart, down through the car, and into the great shell which lay below.

When Mr. Bryce and several workmen came running back with William Cunningham, they were as much surprised as he had been, and could form no theory to account for the disappearance of the car. It could not have slipped down accidentally and descended by its own weight, for the trap-door was open and the grating was in place. They sent in great haste for Mr. Clewe, and when he arrived he wasted no time in conjectures, but instantly ordered that the engine which was attached to the car should be started and its chain wound up.

So great was the anxiety to get the car to the surface of the earth that the engine which raised it was run at as high a speed as was deemed safe, and in a little more than an hour the car came out of the mouth of the shaft, and in it sat Ivan Rovinski, motionless and dead.

No one who knew Rovinski wondered that he had had the courage to make the descent of the shaft, and those who were acquainted with his great mechanical ability were not surprised that he had been able to manage, by himself, the complicated machinery which would ordinarily require the service of several men. But every one who saw him in the car, or after he had been taken out of it, was amazed that he should be dead. There was no sign of accident, no perceptible wound, no appearance, in fact, of any cause why he should be a tranquil corpse and not an alert and agile devil. Even when a post-mortem examination was made, the doctors were puzzled. A thread-like solution of continuity was discovered in certain parts of his body, but it was lost in others, and the coroner's verdict was that he came to his death from unknown causes while descending a shaft. The general opinion was that in some way or other he had been frightened to death.

This accident, much to Roland Clewe's chagrin, discovered to the public the existence of the great shaft. Whether or not he would announce its existence himself, or whether he would close it up, had not been determined by Clewe. But when he and Margaret had talked over the matter soon after the terrible incident, his mind was made up beyond all possibility of change, and, by means of great bombs, the shaft was shattered and choked up for a depth of half a mile from its mouth. When this work was accomplished nothing remained but a shallow well, and when this had been filled up with solid masonry, the place where the shaft had been was as substantial as any solid ground.

Now the great discovery was probably shut out forever from the world, but Clewe was well satisfied. He would never make another shaft, and it was not to be expected that men would plan and successfully construct one which would reach down to the transparent nucleus of the earth. The terrible fate, whatever it was, which had overtaken Rovinski, should not, if Clewe could help it, overtake any other human being.

"But my great discovery," said he to Margaret, "that remains as wonderful as the sun, and as safe to look upon; for with my Artesian ray I can bore down to the solid centre of the earth and into it, and any man can study it with no more danger than if he sat in his arm-chair at home. And if they doubt what I say about the material of which that solid centre is composed, we can show them the fragments of it which I brought up with me."

CHAPTER XXV

LAURELS

NOTHING but a perusal of the newspapers, magazines, and scientific journals of the day could give any idea of the enthusiastic interest which was shown all over the civilized world in Roland Clewe's account of the discovery of the north pole. His paper on the subject, which was the first intimation the public had of the great news, was telegraphed to every part of the world, and translated into nearly every written language. Sardis became a Mecca for explorers and scientific people at home and abroad, and honors of every kind were showered by geographical and other learned societies upon Clewe and the brave company who had voyaged under the ice.

Each member of the party who had sailed on the *Dipsey* became a hero, and spent most of those days in according receptions to reporters, scholars, travellers, sportsmen, and as many of the general public as could be accommodated.

Sarah Block received her numerous visitors in the parlor of the house which had been occupied by Mr. Clewe (which he had vacated in her favor the moment he had heard an intimation that she would like to have it), in a beautiful gown made of the silky fibre from the pods of the American milkweed, now generally used in the manufacture of the finest fabrics.

Sarah fully appreciated her position as the woman who had visited the pole, a position not only unique at the time, but which she believed would always remain so. In every way she endeavored to make her appearance suitable to her new position. She wore the best clothes that her money could buy, and furnished her new house very handsomely. She discarded her old silver andirons and fender, which required continual cleaning, and which would not have been tolerated by her except that they were made of a metal which was now so cheap as to be used for household utensils, and she put in their place a beautiful set of polished brass, such as people used in her mother's time. Whenever Sarah found any one whom she considered worthy to listen, she gave a very full account of her adventures, never omitting the loss of her warm and comfortable shoes, which misfortune, together with the performances of Rovinski, and all the dangers consequent, and the acquaintance of the tame and lonely whale, she attributed to the fact that there were thirteen people on board.

Sammy's accounts were in a more cheerful key, and his principles were not affected by his success. He never had believed that there was any good in finding the pole, and he did not believe it now. When they got there, it was just like any other part of the ocean, and it required a great deal of arithmetic and navigation to find out where it was, even when they were looking at it; besides, as he had found out to his disgust, even when they had discovered it, it was not the real pole to which the needle of the compass points.

Moreover, if there had been any distinctive mark about it, except the buoy which they had anchored there, and even if it really were the pole to which needles should point, there was no particular good in finding it, unless other people could get there. But in regard to any other expedition reaching the open polar sea under the ice, Sammy had grave doubts. If a whale could not get out of that sea, there was every reason why nobody else should try to get into it. The *Dipsey's* entrance was the barest scratch, and he would not try it again, if the north pole were marked out by a solid mountain of gold.

Roland Clewe refused in all personal interviews to receive the laudations offered him as the discoverer of the pole. It was true that the expedition had been planned by him, and all the arrangements and mechanisms which had insured its success were of his invention, but he steadily insisted that Mr. Gibbs and Sammy, as representatives of the party, should be awarded the glory of the great discovery.

The remarkable success of this most remarkable expedition aroused a wide-spread spirit of arctic exploration. Not only were voyages under the ice discussed and planned, but there was a strong feeling in favor of overland travel by means of the electric-motor sledges, and in England and Norway expeditions were organized for the purpose of reaching the polar sea in this way. It was noticed in most that was written and said upon this subject that one of the strongest inducements for arctic expeditions was the fact that there would be found on the shores of the polar sea a telegraph station, by means of which instantaneous news of success could be transmitted.

The interest of sportsmen, especially of the hunters of big game, was greatly excited by the statement that there was a whale in the polar sea. These great creatures being extinct everywhere else, it would be a unique and crowning glory to capture this last survivor of his race, and there were many museums of natural history which were already discussing contracts with intending polar whalers for the purchase of the skeleton of the last whale.

During all this time of enthusiasm and excitement, Roland Clewe made no reference, in any public way, to his great discovery, which, in his opinion, far surpassed in importance to the world all possible arctic discoveries. He was busily engaged in increasing the penetrating distance of his Artesian ray, and when the public mind should have sufficiently recovered from the perturbation into which it had been thrown by the discovery of the pole, he intended to lay before it the results of his researches into the depths of the earth.

At last the time arrived when he was ready for the announcement of the great achievement of his life. The machinery for the production of the Artesian ray had been removed to the larger building which had contained the automatic shell, and was set up very near the place where the mouth of the great shaft had been. The lenses were arranged so that the path of the great ray should run down alongside of the shaft and but a few feet from it. The screen was set up as it had been in the other building, and everything was made ready for the operations of the photic borer.

About a dozen of the most distinguished specialists in the various branches of science concerned in his operations had been invited by Clewe to be present on this occasion, and in addition, of course, were reporters from the principal newspapers. There were several ladies present, one of them the celebrated Ida Tippengray, professor of geology at Bryn Mawr College, whose recent work upon the carboniferous rocks had excited great attention. Margaret Raleigh and Sarah Block were also present, and Sammy, with Mr. Gibbs and all the *Dipsey* people, assembled to learn what had been done at the works during their absence, without any suspicion that there was a discovery possible which could throw even the smallest shadow upon their exploits.

The address which Roland Clewe now delivered to the company was made as brief and as much to the point as possible. The description of the Artesian ray was listened to with the deepest interest and with a vast amount of unexpressed incredulity. What he subsequently said regarding his automatic shell and its accidental descent through fourteen miles of the earth's crust excited more interest and more incredulity, not entirely unexpressed. Clewe was well known as a man of science, an inventor, an electrician of rare ability, and a person of serious purpose and strict probity, but it was possible for a man of great attainments and of the highest moral character to become a little twisted in his intellect.

When at last the speaker told of his descent into the shaft, of his passage fourteen miles into the interior of the earth, of his discoveries on which he based his theory that the centre of our globe is one vast diamond, there was a general laugh from the reporters' quarter, and the men of science began to move uneasily in their seats and to talk to each other. Professor Tippengray, her silver hair brushed smoothly back from her pale countenance, sat looking at the speaker through her gold spectacles as if the rays from her bright eyes would penetrate into the very recesses of his soul. Not an atom of doubt was in her mind. She never doubted: she believed or she disbelieved. At present she believed. She had come there to do that, and she would wait, and when the proper time had come to disbelieve she would do so.

If there had been any disposition in the audience to considerately leave the man of shattered intellect to the care of his friends, it disappeared when Clewe said that he would now be glad to show to all present the workings of the Artesian ray. Crazy as he might be, they wanted to wait and see what he had done. The workmen who had charge of the machinery were on hand, and in a few moments a circle of light was glowing on the ground within the screen. Clewe now announced that he would take those present, one at a time, inside the inclosure and show them how light could be made to penetrate miles downward into the solid earth and rock.

Professor Tippengray was the first one invited to step within the screen. Clewe stood at the entrance, ready to explain or to hand her the necessary telescopes, and as the portion of her body which remained visible was between him and the light, there was nothing to disturb his nerves.

The lenses were so set that they could penetrate almost instantly to the depth which had previously been reached, but Clewe made his ray move downward somewhat slowly. He did not wish, especially to the first observer, to show everything at once.

As she beheld at her feet a great lighted well, extending downward beyond the reach of her sharp eyes, Professor Tippengray stepped back with a scream which caused nearly everybody in the audience to start to his feet. Clewe expected this. He raised his hand to the company, asking them to keep still. Then he handed Professor Tippengray a stick.

"Take this," he said, "and strike that disk of light. You will find it as solid ground as that you stand on."

She did so.

"It is solid!" she gasped, "but where is the end of the stick?"

He turned off the light. There was the end of the stick, and there was the little patch of sandy gravel, which he stepped upon, stamping heavily as he did so.

He then retired outside the screen. Professor Tippengray turned to the audience.

"It is all right, gentlemen," she said. "There is nothing to be afraid of. I am going on with the investigation."

Down, down, down went the light, and, telescope in hand, she stood close to the shining edge of the apparent shaft.

"Presently," Clewe said, "you will see the end of the shaft which my Artesian ray is making. Then you will perceive a vast expanse of lighted nothingness. That is the great cleft in the diamond which I described to you. In this, apparently suspended in light, you will notice the broken conical end of an enormous iron shell, the shell which made the real tunnel down which I descended in the car."

At this she turned around and looked at him. Even into her strong mind the sharp edge of distrust began to insert itself.

"Look!" said he.

She looked through her telescope. There was the cave of light—there was the shattered end of the shell.

The hands which held the telescope began to tremble. Quickly Clewe drew her away.

"Now," said he, "do you believe?"

For a few moments she could not speak, and then she whispered, "I believe that I have seen what you have told me I should see."

Now succeeded a period of intense excitement, such as was perhaps never before known in an assembly of scientific people. One by one, each person was led by Clewe inside the screen and shown the magical shaft of light. Each received the revelation according to his nature. Some were dumfounded and knew not what to think. Others suspected all sorts of tricks, especially with the telescopes. But a well-known optician, who at Clewe's request had brought a telescope of his own, quickly disproved all suspicions of this kind. Many could not help doubting what they had seen, but it was impossible for them to formulate their doubts, with that wonderful shaft of light still present to their mental visions.

For more than two hours Roland Clewe exhibited the action of his Artesian ray. Then he called the company to order. He had shown them his shaft of light, and now he would give them some facts in regard to the real shaft made by the automatic shell.

Every man who had been concerned in Mr. Clewe's descent into the shaft, and those who had assisted in the sounding and the photographing, as well as the persons who had been present when Rovinski was drawn up from its depths, now came forward and gave their testimony. Clewe then exhibited the photographs he had taken with his suspended camera, and to the geologists present these were revelations of absorbing interest. Seeing so much that they understood, it was difficult to doubt what they saw and did not understand.

Now that what Clewe had just told them was substantiated by a number of witnesses, and now that they had heard from these men that a plummet, a camera, and a car had been lowered fourteen miles into the bowels of the earth, they had no reason to suppose that the great shaft had existed only in the imagination of one crazy man, and they could not believe that all these assistants and workmen were lunatics or liars. Still they doubted. Clewe could see that in their faces as they intently listened to him.

"My friends," said he, "I have set before you nearly all the facts connected with my experience in the shaft, but one important fact I have not yet mentioned. I am quite sure that few, if any, of you believe that I descended into the cleft of a great diamond lying beneath what we call the crust of the earth. I will now state that before I left that cavity I picked up some fragments of the material of which it is composed, which were splintered off when my shell fell into it. I will show you one of them."

A man brought a table covered with a blue cloth, and from one of his pockets Clewe drew a small bag. Opening this, he took out a diamond which he had brought up from the cave of light, and placed it on the middle of the table.

"This," he said, "is a fragment of the mass of diamond into which I descended. I have called it the 'Great Stone of Sardis.'"

Nobody spoke—nobody seemed to breathe. The huge diamond, of the form and size of a large lemon, lay glowing upon the dark cloth. Its irregular facets—all of them clean-cut and polished, the results of fracture—absorbed and reflected the light, and a halo of subdued radiance surrounded the great gem like a tender mist.

"I brought away a number of fragments of the diamond," said Clewe, his voice sounding as if he spoke into an empty hall, "and some of them have been tested by two of the gentlemen present. Here are the stones which have been tested." He laid some small pieces on the cloth. "They are of the same material as the large one. I brought them all from what I believe to be the great central core of the earth."

Everybody pressed forward. They surrounded the table. One of the jewellers reverently took up the great stone; then in his other hand he took one of the smaller fragments, which he instantly recognized from its peculiar shape. He looked from one to the other. Presently he said:

"They are the same substances. This is a diamond." And he laid the great stone back upon the cloth.

"Is there any other place on the surface of this earth, or is there any mine," inquired a shrill voice from the company, "where one could get a diamond like that?"

"There is no such place known to mortal man," replied the jeweller.

"Then," said the same shrill voice, which belonged to a professor from Harvard, "I think it is the duty of every one present, whose mind is capable of it, to believe that the centre of this earth, or a part of that centre, is a vast diamond. At the same time, I would say that my mind is not capable of such a belief."

THE public excitement produced by the announcement of the discovery of the pole was a trifle compared to that resulting from the news of the proceedings of that day. Clewe's address, with full accounts by the reporters, was printed everywhere, and it was not long before the learned world had given itself up to the discussion.

From this controversy Roland Clewe kept himself aloof. He had done all that he wanted to do, he had shown all that he cared to show. Now he would let other people investigate his facts and his reasonings and argue about them. He would retire—he had done enough.

Professor Tippengray was one of the most enthusiastic defenders of Clewe's theories, and wrote a great deal on the subject.

"Granted," she said in one of her articles, "that the carboniferous minerals, of which the diamond is one, are derived from vegetable matter, and that wood and plants must have existed before the diamond, where, may I ask, did the pre-diamond forests derive their carbon? In what form did it exist before they came into being?"

In another essay she said:

"Half a century ago it was discovered that a man could talk through a thousand miles of wire, and yet now we doubt that a man can descend through fourteen miles of rock."

As to the Artesian ray itself there could be no doubt whatever, for when Clewe, in one of his experiments, directed it horizontally through a small mountain, and objects could be plainly discerned upon the other side, discussions in regard to the genuineness of the action of the photic borer were useless.

In medicine, as well as in surgery, the value of the Artesian ray was speedily admitted by the civilized world. To eliminate everything between the eye of the surgeon and the affected portion of a human organism was like the rising of the sun upon a hitherto benighted region.

In the winter Margaret Raleigh and Roland Clewe were married. They travelled, they lived and loved in pleasant places, and they returned the next year rich in new ideas and old art trophies. They bought a fine estate, and furnished it and improved it as an artist paints a picture—without a thought of the cost of the colors he puts upon it. They were rich enough to have everything they cared to wish for. Undue toil and troubled thought had been the companions of Roland Clewe for many a year, and their company had been imposed upon him by his poverty. Now he would not, nor would his wife, allow that companionship to be imposed upon him by his riches.

The Great Stone of Sardis was sold to a syndicate of kings, each member of which was unwilling that this dominant gem of the world should belong exclusively to any royal family other than his own. When a coronation should occur, each member of the syndicate had a right to the use of the jewel. At other times it remained in the custody of one of the great bankers of the world, who at stated periods allowed the inhabitants of said planet to gaze upon its transcendent brilliancy.

But the works at Sardis were not given up. Margaret was not jealous of her rival, science, and if Roland had ceased to be an inventor, a discoverer, a philosopher, simply because he had become a rich and happy husband, he would have ceased to be the Roland she had loved so long.

The discovery of the north pole had given him fame and honor, for, notwithstanding the fact that he had never been there, he was always considered as the man who had given to the world its only knowledge of its most northern point.

But in his heart Roland Clewe placed little value upon this discovery. Before Mr. Gibbs had announced the exact location of the north pole, all the students of geography had known where it was. Before the eyes of the party on the *Dipsey* had rested upon the spot pointed out by Mr. Gibbs, it was well understood that the north pole was either an invisible point on the surface of ice or an invisible point on the surface of water. If no possible good could result from a journey such as the *Dipsey* had made, no subsequent good of a similar kind could ever be expected; for the next submarine vessel which attempted a Northern journey under the ice was as likely to remain under the ice as it was to emerge into the open air, and if any one reached the open sea upon motor sledges, it would be necessary for them to carry boats with them if they desired so much as a sight of that weather-vane which, no matter how the wind blew, always pointed to the south.

It was the Artesian ray which Clewe considered the great achievement of his life, and to this he intended to devote the remainder of his working days. It was his object to penetrate deeper and deeper with this ray into the interior of the earth. He could always provide himself with telescopes which would show him the limit reached by his photic borer, and so long as that limit was a transparent disk, illuminated by his great ray, so long he would believe in the existence of the diamond centre of the earth. When the penetrating light reached something different, then would come the time for a change in his theories.

Discussion and controversy in regard to the discoveries of the Artesian ray continued, often with great earnestness and heat, in learned circles, and there were frequent demands upon Clewe to demonstrate the truth of his descent of fourteen miles below the surface of the earth by an actual exhibition of the shaft he had made or by the construction of another.

But to such requests Clewe turned a deaf ear. It would be impossible for him to open his old shaft. If in any way he could remove the rocks and soil which now blocked up its upper portion for a distance of half a mile, it would be impossible to reconstruct any portion which had been obstructed. The smooth and polished walls of the shaft, which gave Clewe such assurance of safety from falling fragments, would not exist if the tunnel were opened.

As to a new shaft, that would require a new automatic shell, and this Clewe was not willing to construct. In fact, rather than make a new opening to the cave of light, he would prefer that people should doubt that any such cave existed. The more he thought of his own descent into that great cleft, the more he thought of the horrible danger of sliding down some invisible declivity to awful, unknown regions. The more he thought of the mysterious death of Rovinski, the more firmly did he determine that not by his agency should a human being descend again to those mysterious depths. He would do all that he could to enable men to see into the interior of this earth, but he would do nothing to help any man to get there.

The controversies in regard to their discoveries and theory disturbed Roland and Margaret not a whit. They worked steadily, with energy and zeal, and, above all, they worked without that dreadful cloud which so frequently overhangs the laborer in new fields—the fear that the means of labor will disappear before the object of the work shall come in view.

One morning in the early summer, Roland rushed into the room where Margaret sat.

"I have made a discovery!" he exclaimed. "Come quickly. I want to show it to you!"

The heart of the young wife sank. During all these happy days the only shadow that ever flitted across her sky was the thought that some novel temptation of science might turn her husband from the great work to which he had dedicated himself. Much that he had purposed to do, he had, at her earnest solicitation, set aside in favor of what she considered the greatest task to which a human being could give his time, his labor, and his thought. It had been long since she had heard her husband speak of a new discovery, and the words chilled her spirit.

"Come," he said, "quickly!" And taking her by the hand, he led her out upon the lawn.

Over the soft green turf, under the beautiful trees, by the bright flowers of the parterres and through the natural beauty of the charming park, he led her. But not a word did she say of the soft colors and the soft air. Not a flower did she look at. It seemed to her as if she trod a bleak and stony road. She dreaded what she might hear, what she might see.

He led her hastily through a gate in the garden wall. They passed through the garden, and, Roland whispering to Margaret to step lightly, they entered a quiet, shady spot beyond the house-grounds.

"This way," he whispered. "Stoop down. Do you see that shining thing with bright red patches of color? It is an old tomato-can. A robin has built her nest in it. There are three dear little birds inside. The mother bird is away, and I wanted you to come before she returned. Isn't it lucky that I should have found that—and here, in our own grounds? I don't believe there was ever another robin who made her nest in a tomato-can!"

Doubtless the two birds who had made that nest sincerely loved each other, and there were at that moment a great many other birds, and a great many men and women, in the same plight, but never anywhere did any human being possess a soul so happy as that of Margaret at that moment.

"Roland," she said, "when I first knew you, you would not have noticed such a little thing as that."

"I couldn't afford it," he said.

"It is the sweetest charm of all your triumphs!" said she.

"What is?" he asked.

"That you feel able to afford it now," answered Margaret.

Samuel Block and his wife Sarah found that life grew pleasanter as they grew older. Fortunate winds had blown down to them from the distant North. The substantial rewards of the enterprise were eminently satisfactory, and the honors which came to them were not at all unwelcome, even to the somewhat cynical Samuel.

Sitting, one evening, with his wife before a cheering fire,—for both of them were wedded to the old-fashioned ways of keeping warm,—Sammy laid down the daily paper with a smile.

"There's an account here," he said, "of a lot o' fools who are goin' to fit out a submarine ship to try to go under the ice to the pole, as we did. They may get there, and they may get back; they may get there, and they may never get back; and they may never get there, and never get back: but whichever of the three it happens to be, it'll be of no more good than if they measured a mile to see how many inches there was in it."

"Sammy," exclaimed Sarah, "I do think you are old enough to stop talkin' such nonsense as that. To be sure, there was a good many things that I objected to in that voyage to the pole. In the first place, there was thirteen people on board, which was the greatest mistake ever committed by a human explorin' party; and then, ag'in, there was no provision for keepin' whales from bumpin' the ship, and if you knew the number of hours that I laid awake on that *Dipsey*, thinkin' what would happen if that frolicsome whale determined not to be left alone, and should follow us into narrow quarters, you would understand my feelin's on that subject. But as to sayin' there wasn't no good in the expedition—I think that's downright wickedness. Look at that fender; look at them andirons, them beautiful brass candlesticks, and that shovel and tongs, with handles shinin' like gold! If it hadn't been that we discovered the pole, and so got able to afford good furniture, all those handsome things would have been made of common silver, just as if they was pots and kittles, or garden-spades!"

MY TRANSLATOPHONE

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MY TRANSLATOPHONE

THE Professor was very old, but he was well preserved—always spoken of as "hale and hearty." He still held his position in his college, and still took a good part in teaching mathematics, but he had an assistant who did the heavy work. He had been principal of the school where the Mistress of the House received her education, and she was much attached to him, and he always spent some part of his summer vacation at her house. The Master of the House, of course, was not there every summer, and so this season the Old Professor had a special treat, for there were many things he liked to talk about in which he knew the two ladies could take no interest.

It rained for two days after his arrival at the house, but the third morning was bright and clear, and the Master of the House conducted his visitor to the favorite resort of the family—a spot the Old Professor knew well and loved. They conversed for a while on some deep subjects, and then they were joined by the two ladies and the Next Neighbor, and the serious discourse changed into light talk ; and John Gayther coming up to pay his respects to the Old Professor, the Next Neighbor was seized with an inspiration.

"John," she said, "you must tell us a story. Sit right down and begin 'Once upon a time—' You know I haven't heard a story for a long time."

"Madam," said John, respectfully, "I always do what the ladies tell me to do; and I am more sorry than I can say, but I have to know beforehand when I am to tell a story, and indeed I haven't one ready."

"Oh, you are clever and can make up as you go along, as the children say."

"John never tells an impromptu story," said the Mistress of the House. "But, my dear Professor," and she turned to the old gentleman, "we are all friends here, and I should so like you to tell us how you got your wife. You once told it to me, and I should like to know what this company will think of the way you won her."

The Old Professor smiled. "I know what you think about it, and I know what I think about it; and, as you say, we are all old friends, and I am rather curious to know what this company will think about it. I will tell my little story." When they were all ready, he began in a clear voice:

"If my Mary were living this story would never have been told; but she has been a blessed spirit now these many years, and has doubtless long known it, and has judged my conduct righteously. Such is my belief." Here he made a reverent pause, and then began again:

"In my early youth I left, for some two or three years, the beaten track—so to speak—of mathematics; or, more properly, mechanics. For I interested myself in inventing, with more or less success, certain scientific machines.

"One of the most successful of these various contrivances, and the one, indeed, in which I was most deeply interested, was a small machine very much resembling in appearance the tube, with a mouth-piece at one end and an ear-piece at the other, frequently used by deaf persons, but very different in its construction and action. In the ordinary instrument the words spoken into the mouth-piece are carried through the tube to the ear, and are then heard exactly as they are spoken. When I used my instrument the person spoke into the mouth-piece exactly as if it were an ordinary tube, but the result was very different, for the great feature of my invention was that, no matter what language was spoken by the person at the mouth-piece, be it Greek, Choctaw, or Chinese, the words came to the ear in perfect English.

"This translation was accomplished by means of certain delicate machinery contained in the end of the mouth-piece, which was longer and larger than that of the ordinary ear-tube, but the outward appearance of which did not indicate that it held anything extraordinary. It would take too long to explain this mechanism to you, and you would not be interested; nor is it necessary to my story.

"When, after countless experiments and disappointments, and days and nights of hard study and hard work, I finished my little machine, which I called a translatophone, I was naturally anxious to see how it would work with some other person than myself at the mouth-piece. In the course of its construction I had frequently tried the machine by putting the ear-piece into my ear and speaking into the mouth-piece such scraps of foreign languages as I was able to command. These experiments were generally satisfactory, but I could not be satisfied that the machine was a success until some one else should speak into it in some foreign tongue of which I knew positively nothing, so that it would be impossible for me to translate it unconsciously.

"This was not an easy thing, and I had determined I would not explain my invention to the public until I had assured myself that it worked perfectly, and until I had had my property in the invention secured to me by patent right. To go to a foreigner and ask him to speak into my instrument, using a language he could readily assure himself I did not speak or understand, would be the same thing as an avowal of what the translatophone was intended to do. I thought of several plans, but none suited me. I did not want to pretend to be deaf, and, even if I did so, I could not explain why I wished to be spoken to in a language I did not use myself.

"In the midst of my cogitations and uncertainties, I received a note from Mary Armat which, for a time, drove from my mind all thought of translatophone and everything concerning it.

"Miss Mary Armat and I had been friends since the days in which we went to school together. I had always liked her above the other girls of my acquaintance, and about three years previous to the time of this story I had almost made up my mind that I was in love with her, and that I would tell her so. This, however, I had not done. At that time I had become intensely interested in some of my inventions, and, although my feelings toward Mary Armat had not in the least changed, I did not visit her as often as had been my custom, and when I did see her I am afraid I told her more about mechanical combinations than she cared to hear. But so engrossed was I that I stupidly failed to notice this, and I did not perceive that I had been neglecting the most favorable opportunities of declaring the state of my affections until she informed me, not in a private interview, but in the midst of her family circle, that she had made up her mind to become a missionary and go to India to work among the heathen. I was greatly shocked, but I could say nothing then, and afterwards had no opportunity to say anything.

"I did not write to Mary, because she was a most independent and high-spirited girl, and I knew it must be spoken words and not written ones which would satisfy her that I had had good reasons for postponing a declaration of love to her until she had left the country.

"So she went to Burma. I frequently heard of her, but we did not correspond. She had gone into her new work with great zeal. She had learned the Burmese tongue, and had even translated a little English book into that language. For some time she had seemed well satisfied; but I heard through her family that she was getting tired of her Eastern life. The rainy seasons were disagreeable to her, the dry seasons did not agree with her; her school duties were becoming very monotonous; and she had found out that in her heart she did not care for the heathen, especially for heathen children. Therefore she had resigned her position and was on her way home. The note I received from her informed me that she had arrived in New York the day before, and that she would be very glad if I would come to see her."

"*She* did a sensible thing, anyway," commented the Master of the House.

The Daughter of the House opened her mouth to say: "I do not like her. She had no enthusiasm, or real goodness, to give up her work so soon and for such reasons." But she suddenly reflected that Mary had been the speaker's wife, and she shut her mouth with a little vicious snap.

"I went to the Armat house that evening, and I found there a very lively girl awaiting me. Her parents and her two sisters had gone out, and we had the parlor to ourselves. Life in Burma may not have suited Mary Armat, but it certainly had improved her, for she was much more charming than when I had last seen her. Moreover, she was so very friendly, and without doubt so glad to see me, she was so bright and full of high spirits, that it might have been supposed she had arranged matters so that we could have the evening to ourselves, and was eminently pleased with her success.

"I admired her more and more every time I looked at her, and I determined that, as soon as the proper time should come, I would make earnest love to her, and tell her what, perhaps, I should have told her long ago. But just now I had other matters on my mind.

"Above all things I wanted Mary to talk into my translatophone, and to speak in Burmese. I knew nothing whatever of that language, and if she should speak it, and the words should come to my ears in pure English, then no further experiment would be necessary, no doubts could possibly exist. But until I had made this test I did not want her to know what the instrument was intended to do; it was barely possible she might play a trick on me and speak in English. But if the thing succeeded I would tell her everything. We two should be the sole owners of the secret of my great invention—an invention which would not only benefit the English-speaking world, but which might be adapted to the language of any nation, and which would make us rich beyond all ordinary probabilities.

"As soon as I had the opportunity I began to speak of the work I had been engaged upon during Mary's absence; and when I approached the subject I thought I saw on her face an expression which seemed to say, 'Oh, dear! are you going to begin on that tiresome business again?' But I was not to be turned from my purpose. Such an opportunity as this was too valuable, too important, to be slighted or set aside for anything else. In a few minutes I might discover whether this invention of mine was a success or a failure. I took my translatophone from my pocket, and laid it on the table beside us.

"'What's that?' she exclaimed. 'You don't mean to tell me you have become hard of hearing?'

"'Oh, no,' said I; 'my hearing is just as good as it ever was.'

"'But that is a thing deaf people use,' she said.

"'Well, yes,' I answered; 'it could be used by deaf people, I suppose, although I have never tried it in that way. It is my latest and, I think, my most important invention. It would take too long to explain its mechanism just now—'

"'Indeed it would,' she interrupted quickly.

"'But what I want to do,' I continued, 'is to make a little trial of it with you.'

"'If you mean you want me to speak into that thing,' she said, 'I do not want to do it. I should hate to think you are deaf and needed anything of the sort. Please put it away; I do not even like the looks of it.'

"But I persisted; I told her that I greatly desired that she should speak a few sentences in Burmese into my instrument. I had a certain reason for this which I would explain afterwards.

"'But you do not understand Burmese,' she said in surprise.

"'Not a word of it,' I answered. 'I do not know how it sounds when it is spoken, nor how it looks when it is written. But there are certain tones and chords, and all that sort of thing, in the foreign languages which are very interesting, no matter whether you understand the language or not.'

"'Oh, it is a sort of musical thing, then,' she said.

"'I will not say it is exactly that,' I replied. 'But if you will simply speak to me in Burmese for a minute or two, that is all I ask of you, and afterwards we can talk about its construction and object.'

"'Oh, I do not want to talk any more about it,' said she; 'but if it will satisfy you, I will say a few words to you in Burmese. Do you speak into this hole?' she said as she took up the instrument.

"I arranged the ear-piece very carefully, and covered my other ear with my hand. Immediately she began to speak to me, and every word came to me in clear and beautiful English! But I knew, as well as I knew that I lived, that the words she spoke were Burmese, or belonged to some other language which she knew I did not understand. The proof of this was in the words themselves.

"'I think you are perfectly horrid,' she said, 'and I am glad to have an opportunity to tell you so, even though you do not understand me. I cannot imagine how anybody can be so stupid as to want to talk about horrible ear-trumpets the first time he meets a girl whom he has not seen for years, and who used to like him so much, and who likes him still in spite of his cruel stupidity. I wonder why you thought I wanted to see you the minute I got home? I am awfully disappointed in you, for I did think you would talk to me in a very different way the first time you saw me. And now I am going to tell you something—and I would rather cut my tongue out than say it in English, but it gives me a wicked delight to say it in Burmese: I love you, John Howard. I have loved you for a long time; and that is the reason I went to Burma; and now that I have come back I am obliged to say that I love you still. If you could invent some sort of a tube that would make you see better with your eyes and understand better with your mind, it would be a great deal more suitable than this horrid, snake-like thing for your ear. I do not suppose you will ever hear me speak this way in English, but I tell you again, John Howard, that I love you, and it makes me sick to think what a goose you are.'

"'Now, then,' she said, putting down the tube, 'was there anything peculiar in the tones and chords of that bit of foreign language?'

"Fortunately the only light in the room was behind me, and therefore I had reason to hope that she did not observe the expression of my countenance. Moreover, as soon as she had finished speaking she had turned her face away from me, and was now leaning back in her chair, her mouth tightly shut and her wide-open eyes directed on the opposite wall. She looked like a woman who had taken a peculiar revenge, and who, in the taking of it, had aroused her soul in its utmost recesses.

"For some moments I did not answer her question. In fact, I could not speak at all. My thoughts were in a mad whirl. Not only had I discovered that my invention, the hope of my life, was an absolute success, but I was most powerfully impressed by the conviction that now I could never tell Mary what my invention was intended to do, for then she would know what it had done.

"'Yes,' I answered, speaking slowly; 'there was a sort of accord, a kind of—'

"I was interrupted in what would have been a very labored sentence by the ringing of the door-bell. Mary instantly rose. It was plain she was laboring under suppressed excitement, for there was no other reason why she should have jumped up in that way. She looked as if she were anxious to see some one, no matter who it was. I, too, felt relieved by the interruption. In my state of wildly conflicting emotions any third person would be a relief.

"The door opened, and Miss Sarah Castle walked in. 'Oh, Mary,' she exclaimed, 'I am so glad to find you at home! As it isn't late and the moon is so bright, I thought I would run over to see you for a few minutes. Oh, Mr. Howard!'

"Sarah Castle was a young woman for whom I had no fancy. Active in mind and body, and apparently constructed of thoroughly well-seasoned material, she was quick to notice, eager to know, and ready at all times to display an interest in the affairs of her friends, with which, in most cases, said friends would willingly have dispensed. As she took a seat she exclaimed:

"'You don't mean to say, Mary, that you went deaf in Burma?'

"Unfortunately I had forgotten to put my translatophone into my pocket, and it was lying in full view on the table. Mary gave a scornful glance toward the innocent tube.

"'Oh, that?' she said. 'That is not mine. It belongs to Mr. Howard.'

"The words 'Mr. Howard' grated upon my nerves. Up to this moment, except through the translatophone, she had not addressed me by my name in any form; and every tentative lover knows that when his lady addresses him as though he had no name it means that she does not wish to use his formal title and that the time has not arrived for her to call him by his Christian name.

"'You deaf?' cried Sarah, turning to me. 'I have never heard anything of that. When did it come on? It must have been very recent.'

"'Oh, he isn't deaf,' said Mary, impatiently. 'It is only one of his inventions. But tell me something of your brothers. I have not heard a word about them yet.'

"But the knowledge-loving Sarah was not to be bluffed off in this way.

"'Oh, they are all right,' said she. 'They are both in college now. But Mr. Howard deaf! I am truly amazed. Do you have to talk to him through this, Mary?'

"Mary Armat was not an ill-natured girl, but, as I said before, she was a high-spirited one, and was at the time in a state of justifiable irritation.

"'Oh, bother that thing!' she answered. 'I told you it is only one of his inventions, and I wish he would put it in his pocket.'

"'Not just yet,' said Sarah. 'I am really anxious to know about it. Why do you use it, Mr. Howard, if you are not deaf?'

"My face must have displayed my extreme embarrassment at this unanswerable question, for Mary came to my relief.

"'Oh, it is a kind of musical instrument,' she said. 'But don't let us talk any more about it. This is the second time I have seen you, but we have not really had a good chance to say anything to each other.'

"I took advantage of this very strong hint, and rose.

"'Musical!' exclaimed the irrepressible Sarah. 'Oh, Mr. Howard, please play on it just the least little bit!'

"Mary allowed herself an expression of extreme disgust. 'Please not while I am present,' she said; 'I could not abide it.'

"I now advanced to take my leave.

"'Do not go just now,' said Sarah; 'I merely ran over for a minute to ask Mary about the Wilmer reception; but as you are going, Mr. Howard, you might as well see me home. It is later now.'

"I retired to a book-table at the other end of the parlor, and it was a good deal later when the two young ladies had finished talking about the Wilmer reception.

"'I do not understand it at all,' said Miss Castle, when we were on the sidewalk. 'You are not deaf, Mr. Howard, and yet you use an ear-trumpet. What does it mean?'

"Of course I did not know what to say, but I had to say something, and, moreover, that something must not be wholly inconsistent with my explanation to Mary.

"'Oh, it is a thing,' I answered, 'that is intended to be used in connection with foreign languages.' Then I made a bold stroke: 'It shows the difference in their resonant rhythms.'

"'Well, I am sure I do not understand that,' said Miss Castle. 'But what is the good of it? Does it make them any pleasanter to listen to?'

"I admitted that it did.

"'Whether you understand them or not?' she asked.

"If this young woman had at this moment fallen down a coal-hole I cannot truthfully say that I should have regretted it.

"'I cannot explain that, Miss Castle,' I said, 'for it would take a long time, and here we are at your door.'

"'Come in and let me try it,' said Sarah.

"'Thank you very much,' I replied, 'but I really cannot. I have an engagement at my club. In fact, I was just going to take leave of Miss Armat when you came in.'

"She looked at me scrutinizingly. 'You used to call her Mary Armat when you spoke of her,' said she, 'but I suppose her having been a missionary makes a difference in that way. I do not believe much in club engagements, but of course we have to recognize them. And if you cannot come in now I wish you would call on me soon. If your invention has anything to do with foreign languages I truly want to try it. I am studying German now, and if it will put any resonant rhythm into that language it will be very interesting.'

"I made a hasty and indefinite promise, and gladly saw the front door shut behind Miss Sarah Castle.

"That night I did not sleep; in fact, I did not go to bed. The words Mary Armat had spoken to me in Burmese should have completely engrossed my every thought, but they did not. For one moment my mind was filled with rapture by the knowledge that I was loved by this lovely girl; and in the next I was overwhelmed by anxiety as to what should be done to make it impossible for her to know that I knew she had spoken those words. But whether my thoughts made me happy or distressed me, there seemed to be but one way out of my troubles; I must be content with Mary's love, that is, if I should be so fortunate as to secure it. There might be doubts about this; women are fickle creatures, and Mary had been very much provoked with me when I parted from her."

"I see what is coming," here interrupted the Next Neighbor, "and I don't approve of it at all!"

"It would be hard," continued the Old Professor, after pausing for further remarks, "to turn my back upon the golden future which my invention would give to Mary and me; but I must win her, golden future or not. I sat before my study fire, and planned out my future actions. As soon as I could see Mary alone I would tell her my love, and I would explain to her why I had not spoken when I first saw her. But in order to do this I should have to be very careful. I would say nothing but the truth, but I would be very guarded in telling that truth. She must not imagine that anything she had said had made me speak. She must not imagine that I thought she expected me to speak.

"I would begin by asking her pardon for worrying her with my invention when I knew she disliked problematic mechanics. Then I would tell her, in as few words as possible, that I had expected this little instrument to give me fame and fortune, and therefore I wanted her to know all about it; and then, before she could ask me why I wanted her to know this, I would tell her it was because I wished to lay that fame and fortune at her feet. After that, in the best way my ardent feelings should dictate, I would offer myself to her without fortune, without fame, just the plain John Howard who loved her with all his heart. If she accepted me, I would tell her that the invention had not worked as I had intended it should, and therefore I should put it behind me forever."

"Oh, dear!" cried the Next Neighbor. "I knew it was coming!"

"Maybe it didn't," said the Master of the House.

"Having come to a decision," the Old Professor went on, with more animation, "upon this most important matter, my mind grew easier and I became happier. What was anything a black tube could do for me—what, indeed, was anything in the world—compared to the love of that dear girl? And so I sat and gazed into the fire, and dreamed waking dreams of blessedness.

"After a time, however, it came to me that I must make up my mind what I was going to do about the translatophone. I might as well take it apart and throw it into the fire at once, and then there would be an end to that danger to the future of which I had been dreaming. Yes; there would be an end to that. But there would also be an end to the great boon I was about to bestow upon the world, a boon the value of which I had not half understood. It truly was a wonderful thing—a most wonderful thing. An American or an Englishman, or any one speaking English, could take with him a translatophone and travel around the world, understanding the language of every nation, of every people—the polished tongues of civilization, the speech of the scholars of the Orient, and even the jabber of the wild savages of Africa. To be sure, he could not expect to answer those who spoke to him, but what of that? He would not wish to speak; he would merely desire to hear. All he would have to do would be to pretend that he was deaf and dumb, and my simple translatophone might put him into communication with the minds of every grade and variety of humanity.

"Then a new thought flashed into my mind. Why only humanity? If I should attach a wide mouthpiece to my instrument, why should I not gather in the songs and cries of the birds? Why should I not hear in plain English what they say to each other? Why should not all creation speak to me so that I could understand? Why should I not know what the dog says when he barks—what words the hen addresses to her chicks when she clucks to them to follow? Why should I not know the secrets of what is now to us a tongue-tied world of nature?

"Then I had another idea, that made me jump from my chair and walk the floor. I might know what the monkeys say when they chatter to each other! What discovery in all natural history could be so great as this? The thought that these little creatures, so nearly allied to man, might disclose to me their dispositions, their hopes, their ambitions, their hates, their reflections upon mankind, had such a sudden and powerful influence on me that I felt like seizing my translatophone and rushing off to the Zoölogical Gardens. It was now daybreak. I might obtain admission!

"But I speedily dismissed this idea. If I should ever hear in English what the monkeys might say to me, I must give up Mary. I should be the slave of my discovery. It would be impossible then to destroy the translatophone. I sat down again before the fire. 'Shall I put an end to it now?' I said to myself. Nothing would be easier than to take its delicate movements and smash them on the hearth. Now a prudent thought came to me: suppose Mary should not accept me? Then, with this great invention lost, —for I never should have the heart to make another, —I should have nothing left in the world. No; I would be cautious, lest in every way my future life should be overcast with disappointment. The sun had risen, and I felt I must go out; I must have air. Before I opened the front door, however, I said to myself, 'Remember it is all settled. It is Mary you must have—that is, if you can get her.'

"Of all things in this world, the mind of man is the most independent, the most headstrong. It will work at your bidding as long as it pleases, and then it will strike out at its own pace and go where it chooses. During a walk of a couple of miles I thought nearly all the time of what the monkeys might say to me if I should attach a wide mouth-piece to my translatophone and place it against the bars of their cage. Over and over again I stopped these thoughts and said to myself: 'But all this is nothing to me. I must consider Mary and nothing else.' Then in a very few minutes I was wondering if the monkeys would ask me questions—if they have as strong a desire to know about us as we have to know about them. From such questions how much I might learn in regard to the mental distance between us and them! But again I put all this away from me and began to plan anew what I should say to Mary. And then again it was not very long before I found myself thinking how intensely interesting it would be to know what the tree-toads say, and what the frogs talk about when they sit calling to each other all night. It might be a little difficult to get near enough to tree-toads and frogs, but I believed I could manage it.

"However, when I returned home I was thinking of Mary.

"It was early in the afternoon, and I was trying to decide what would be the best time to visit the Armat house. The monkeys had not ceased to worry me dreadfully, and I had begun to think that when bees buzz around their hives they must certainly say something interesting to each other. Then a note was brought to me from Mary. I tore it open and read:

" 'I want you to come to see me this afternoon. If you possibly can, come about four o'clock, and bring that speaking-tube with you. Miss Castle has been here nearly all the morning, and some things she has said to me have worried me very much. Please come, and do not forget the ear-trumpet.'

"This she signed merely with her initials.

"Mary's note drove to the winds monkeys, bees, and the rest of the world. What had that wretched mischief-maker, that Castle girl, been saying to her? I did not believe that the mind of Mary Armat was capable of originating an unfounded suspicion of me; but the mind of Sarah Castle was capable of originating anything. She had doubtless suspected that there must be some extraordinary reason for my desire to have people talk to me through a tube in a language I did not understand. She had been too impatient to wait until she could try her German upon me, and she had gone to Mary and had filled her mind with horrible conjectures. One thing was certain: no matter what else happened, I must not take that translatophone to Mary. After what Sarah had said to her there could be no doubt that she would make me speak to her in a foreign language through the tube. It would be easy enough: she could give me a French book and tell me to read a few pages. No matter how badly I should pronounce the words, they would reach her ears in pure English!

"And then!

"I took my translatophone from the cabinet in which I kept it. The easiest way to destroy it was to throw it at once into the fire; but that would fill the house with the smell of burning rubber. No; it was only necessary to destroy the internal movements. I unscrewed the long mouth-piece, and gently withdrew from it the little membrane-covered cylinder, not six inches in length, which formed the soul of my invention. I took it in my hand and gazed upon it. Through its thin, flexible, and almost transparent outer envelope I could see, as I held it to the light, its framework, fine as the thread-like bones of a fish, its elastic chords, its quivering diaphragms, and all the delicate organs of its inner life. It seemed as if I could feel the palpitations of its heart as I breathed upon it. For how many days and months had I been working on this subtle invention—working, and thinking, and dreaming! Here it lay, perfect, finished, ready to tell me more than any man ever has known—a thing almost of life, and ready to be brought to life by the voice of man or beast or bird, or perhaps of any living thing. Could I have the heart to destroy it? Could I have the heart to turn my back upon the gate of the world of wonders which was just opening to me?

"'Yes,' said I to myself; 'I have the heart to do anything that will prevent my losing the love of Mary Armat.'

"Then an evil thought came to me, and tempted me: 'If you choose you can hear the monkeys talk and have Mary too. Everything you want is in your own hands. Don't put that little machine back into the tube. Lock it up safely out of sight, and then go to Mary with your instrument, and you can talk into it and she can listen, and she may talk and you may listen. Yes, you may have your Mary—and she need never know that you understand what the monkeys may say to you, or what she has said to you.'

"I am proud that I entertained this evil thought for but a very short time. I turned upon it and stormed at it. 'No!' I exclaimed. 'I shall never win Mary by cheating her! Whether I get her or not, I will be worthy of her.'

"Then there came another thought, apparently innocent and certainly persuasive. 'Do not destroy the translatophone. Then, if things do not turn out well between you and Mary, you will still have the monkeys.'

"'No,' I said to myself; 'I must have Mary. I will have nothing to fall back upon. I will allow nothing to exist that might draw me back.'

"There was another thing I might do: I might take my translatophone to her, and explain everything. But would there be any possibility, even if she did not fly from me in shame and never see me again, that I could make her believe in a love which had been so spurred on, even aroused, as she might well imagine mine had been? No; that would never do. Apart from anything else, it would be impossible for me to be so cruel as to let Mary know I had understood the Burmese words she had spoken to me.

"I looked at the clock; it was half-past three. Whatever was to be done must be done now. I cast one more look of longing affection upon the quivering, throbbing little creature, which to me was as much alive as if it had been a tired bird panting in my hand; and then I gently laid it on the hearth. I lifted my left foot and let it hang for an instant over the hopes, the fears, the anxieties, the happy day-dreams those early years of my life had given me, and then, with relentless cruelty, not only to that quivering object but to myself, I brought down my foot with all my strength!

"There was a slight struggle for an instant, during which there came to me quick, muffled sounds, which to my agitated brain sounded like the moans of despair from that vast world of animal intelligence which does not speak to man. From my own heart there came a groan. All was over! From the mysterious inner courts of the animal kingdom no revelations would ever come to me! The thick curtain between the intelligence of man and the intelligence of beast and bird which I had raised for a brief moment had now been dropped forever! I should never make another translatophone.

"I cast no glance upon the hearth, but put on my hat and coat and went to Mary. As I walked there rose behind me a cloud of misty disappointment, while before me there was nothing but dark uncertainty. What would Mary have to say to me? And how should I explain what would seem to her to be a cowardly evasion of her plainly expressed request?

"When I entered the Armat parlor I found Mary alone. This encouraged me a little. I had feared that the yearningly inquisitive Sarah might also be there. In that case how might I hope to preserve one atom of my secret?

"Mary came forward with a smile, and held out her hand; I was so astonished I could not speak.

"'Now don't be cross,' said she. 'As I told you in my note, Sarah Castle was here this morning, and she greatly troubled my mind about you. She told me I was actually snappish with you when she was here last night. She had never heard me speak to any one in such an ill-natured way. She knew very well that I do not care for inventions and machines, but she did not consider this any reason for my treating you in such a manner. She said I ought to have known that your whole soul is wrapped up in the queer things you invent, and that I should have made some allowance for you, even if I did not care about such things myself. Now when she told me this I knew that every word was true, and I was utterly ashamed of myself; and as soon as she left I sent you that note because I wanted you to let me beg your pardon—which you may consider has been done. And now please let me see your speaking-tube. I want you to explain it to me; I want to know how it is made, and what is its object. For I know very well that even if your inventions are not successful they always have very good objects. Please forgive me, and let us sit on the sofa and have a nice talk together such as we should have had last night.'

"My soul shouted with joy within me, and I said to myself: 'We shall have the nice talk we should have had last night, but it shall be the talk you wanted then, and not the one you ask for now.'

"'Now, then,' said she, when we had seated ourselves, 'let us go to work to make experiments with your tube. I am so glad you do not feel about it as I thought you would.'

"'I did not bring it,' I said.

"'Oh, what a pity!' interrupted Mary.

"'No,' said I; 'it is not a pity. It did not work as I expected it would, and there is no use in talking any more about it. I placed great hopes in it, and I had a particular reason for wanting to tell you all about it.' Then I began and bravely told her all about it, that is, all that justice and kindness would permit me to tell. In the conversation which ensued, which was a very happy exchange of sentiment, it was wonderful how that translatophone was put into the background.

"A great deal of what Mary said in answer to my passionate avowals she had already said to me in Burmese. But the fact that those straightforward, honest words, fresh from a true woman's heart, and spoken only for the satisfaction of her own frank and impetuous nature, had come to me before in plain English she did not imagine, nor did I ever allow her to imagine. This secret of her soul I always regarded as something that came to me in involuntary confidence, and I always respected that confidence."

"Were you never sorry?" asked the Daughter of the House, when the Old Professor ceased.

"No," he said thoughtfully; "I have never been sorry for what I did. I had a very happy life with my Mary—a life far happier than any wonder-exciting invention could have given me."

"Was it fair to the world to destroy an instrument that might have been of great advantage to science?" ventured John Gayther, hesitatingly.

"It is not easy," said the Old Professor, "to decide between what we owe to the world and science, and what we owe to ourselves. You see, I decided in favor of myself. Possibly another man would have decided in favor of the invention."

"Not if he were desperately in love," said the Master of the House.

"All those fine-spun feelings were unnecessary," said the Next Neighbor. "If you had not confused your mind with them you would have seen clearly enough that the first idea which came into your head was the proper one to act upon. It would have been no terrible deception if you had taken the instrument to Mary without the little machine and talked English with her. Later you could have told her you had the invention and you could use it. By that time she would have forgotten that she ever had made that Burmese speech, and would have been glad of the fame and fortune the machine would surely have brought."

The Old Professor looked pained. "I do not deny that some such after-thoughts troubled my mind occasionally for some years. But who can say anything of the 'might have been'? The instrument might have failed, after all; or the information gained have proved not worth the hearing; or—"

Here there was an unlooked-for interruption. The red thrush suddenly burst into song from the midst of the lilac-bushes, and the whole company listened spellbound with delight while the little creature filled the air with melody and sweetness.

When the song ceased, the Professor remarked: "My translatophone would have been worse than useless here. If I could have heard those words I should have lost that delicious melody. Doubtless the words were commonplace enough, but the melody was divine. And it was easy to interpret the spirit of it. It was a song of joy for all that is pleasant, and bright, and happy in this world."

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